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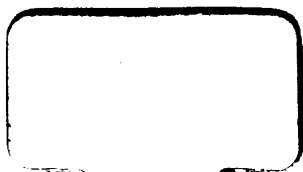
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## **SELF-FORMATION.**



SELF-FORMATION;  
OR, THE  
HISTORY OF AN INDIVIDUAL MIND:

INTENDED AS A GUIDE FOR THE INTELLECT THROUGH  
DIFFICULTIES TO SUCCESS.

BY A FELLOW OF A COLLEGE.

*Babel Lofft*

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Omnis boni principium intellectus cogitabundus.—VETUS AUCTOR.

Necessario enim requiritur ut melior ac perfectior intellectus humani usus atque adoperatio introducatur.—LORD BACON.

So build we up the being that we are;  
Thus deeply drinking in the soul of things,  
We shall be wise perforce.—WORDSWORTH.

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# SELF-FORMATION.

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## CHAPTER VIII.

A soul without reflection, like a pile  
Without inhabitant, to ruin falls.—YOUNG.

THIS was another epoch of my life—a resting place, to translate the word epoch from learned into plain language; and so, that I may do justice to etymology, I will stop a brief while and look around me, carrying myself back in imagination, as well as I may, to the scenes and sentiments of that period. I had passed from the childhood of my intellect to its boyhood. Instead of taking everything upon trust, and reproducing it upon order in the same form that it was given me, I had got by this time into the habit of looking out for myself, and combining and recombining as I pleased my store of imagery. I was becoming every day less mechanical and more rational. I was impatient of mere school drudgery. I regarded all its methods and elements as nothing more than the scaffolding whereby my intellectual structure had been raised; and now that its end, as I fancied, somewhat foolishly, was achieved, I was uneasy till it should be cleared away from before me, and the glories of existence

revealed fully to my sight. Again I fell in love with solitude. I became contemplative and musing—an airy castle-builder—a framer of figures out of the rich texture of the clouds. I rested from my labours; it was enough for me that my heart was filled with the mere prospect of the works of the Almighty. My thoughts, or, as I should rather call them, my imaginations, floated onward like a mist; receiving and reflecting many bright and lovely colours, but incapable of any regular character or definite conformation. Their path was as inexplicable as that of the arrow through the air to the sage in scripture; but my general tone of sentiment I well remember; it was much like what my sensations have often been in a lovely spring morning, when the heart is glad within the bosom, when we feel, as it were, Platonized in our existence, penetrated with the soul of Nature, and every nerve and fibre in full unison with her tone.

Where only to feel that we breathe, that we live,  
Is worth the best joy that life elsewhere can give.

There must be something against nature in solitude, something foreign to the moral sense. The proof is, that, however delicious it may be to us, we do not like to be seen or known as votaries of it. This was my own feeling. The garish eye of observation was too frequently upon me in my wanderings; and so, in order to avoid it, and at the same time to luxuriate in my darling sin of musingness, I betook myself to the game of cricket; if indeed it can be called a game, when in fact it is no game at all to eighteen out of the

two-and-twenty engaged in it: as for the rest, they do not play in good earnest, they merely play at playing. But be that as it may, as my humour then was, I was mightily beholden to it; a better pretext for idleness was never framed. There I used to stand hour by hour, basking, the outward boy of me in the sun, and my inward heart and soul in the deliciousness of my day-dreams, the warm radiance of my imagination. Six hours and upwards in the day, that is, the whole available time of it, I have often exhausted in this fashion; for the ceremony and circumstance of a double wicket game can be despatched in no shorter period. This I must needs say requires revisal. No one thinks better of recreation than I do; no one abhors more heartily any overstrain of labour; but rest is no rest except as a relaxation from work; and for a boy to play all day long, "from morn to noon, from noon to dewy eve," and plead that he is recreating himself, is as absurd as it would be in a dramdrinker to dose himself every quarter of an hour, and pretend that he is only taking a cordial. Apropos of this,—it was said of a great monarch of old, that he was never drunk more than once in his whole life. This it seems was true; but the panegyric implied in the truth was something qualified, when it appeared that his virtue was one of necessity; that he could not possibly in fact have been drunk more than once, inasmuch as his single fit lasted him his whole life through; and so of our Eton cricketers. They play but once in a day; ergo, they are studious to a marvel, or, as they ask in Chancery, How otherwise? Not altogether so. Their game is

the natal genius of their day, the *comes qui temperat*, the soul of the body. They are bound up in the same band; they rise, grow up, and vanish together.

This was the complexion of my life for some three or four weeks' space. But the pleasure of indolence, like all other illicit pleasures, is but of fleeting quality. The still water may reflect heaven upon its face for a time, but it is sure at last to be encrusted with all kinds of foulness and seculence. I began to find that irksomeness weighed heavily upon me.

In otio nescit quid velit;  
Incertè errat animus; præter propter vitam vivitur.

I felt myself continually prompted to my relief by the instinct of activity. I wanted to bestow myself somewhere; the only difficulty was to determine the object. But my suspense was not long. Just about that time one of the many Eton periodicals, extant for a brief moment and then extinct for ever, happened to spring up: a wretched paper-boat, swamped in the current of Time almost as soon as it was committed to its surface. However, our vanity would take no warning from foreign experience—it would never rest till it had wrecked itself. These little things were great to such very little intellects as our own. At the first mention of the project our public interest was kindled and spread like wildfire; not a stripling, in short, who had any reputation for cleverness, or fancied that he deserved it, but was ambitious to give his tribute. Of the many I was one, by force of restlessness, impatience, and wounded vanity. As for classical scholarship, I was

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aware that I had long been falling back from the front ranks, and was then, as they say at Newmarket, nowhere in the race. I had tried myself on another tack. I had lost my reckoning in algebra; my hope of distinction there had been racked to death; but here was a fresh project, one that promised well, and I believed its promises in the fulness of young faith. I resolved to appear in the lists, and put my pen, not in rest, but in activity, for the honour of Eton.

One evening as I lay in bed, after I had wearied myself during the day by the distraction of different subjects for my choice, I determined by a sudden thought to make an end of my perplexity, and decide within ten minutes. This was wisely done. In such cases we can hardly choose ill, if we do but fix our choice promptly and definitely. A few days before, something on the character of Cæsar had appeared in our periodical. This in all probability gave a bias to my thoughts, and pointed to that particular period of history. Accordingly I took Cicero for my subject—the death of Cicero. I fancied all sorts of fine things: the scene on the sea-coast, the approach of the ruffian yet licensed murderers, the alarm of his family, their wild horror and his own dignified despair, the agony of departure, the hurry of flight and of pursuit, hope, fear, uncertainty, and at last the bloody consummation. Here was a glorious outline, and some glorious features to fill it up. I saw that it was good. I was right well content, and fell asleep in the persuasion that in another day or two I should have realized the rough sketch of my imagination.

I was up and at my work early the next morning. I struck off a few sentences that might have served very well, if I had only suffered them to stand ; but no, they were not sufficiently exact, they wanted the last polish. This or that phrase was not quite the thing, and here and there a word or two must be struck out or altered. This was the original sin. I had yet to learn, and indeed few writers do learn it except by long experience, that if I would write well I should write, to borrow a surgical term, on the first intention. I fell to blotching and tinkering, making many holes where I mended one, and then my chance was gone. I was thenceforward a lost spirit, an "*âme damnée*," in authorship.

There is but one right method in composition, that of thorough ease and freedom. Do what you will, much or little, but strain not above your strength to do it ; otherwise, if you go beyond your range but once, the longer you persist, the deeper and more hopelessly are you plunged in bog, brier, and all perplexity. Of this I had full experience. I was like the young painter, who, in his anxiety to surpass himself, never knows when he has done enough, but must still be dabbling, and altering, here a touch and there a touch, till at last he succeeds in fretting and vexing his portrait into an ill-favoured perversity of countenance, and finds that he has all his work to do again. Like that same painter, I had kept my eye fixed upon my subject till my vision was fairly blunted and confounded by it ; my whole faculty harassed, wearied, and worn out, from continuity of strain ; and the thing itself

floated before my impotence wildly and vaguely, like the creation of a feverish dream.

I had thought  
Too long and deeply, till my brain became,  
In its own eddy whirling and o'erwrought,  
A boiling gulf of phantasy and flame.

Still I persevered, not in the cheerfulness of hope, but in the bitter bravery of despair. I was too proud and self-conceited to yield—aye, even to nature herself, until I was absolutely mastered by her. This is a sad use of a goodly instrument—*non hos quæsitum munus in usus*. Perseverance is a noble virtue when put to its proper application, when practised gradually, and orderly, and to a sure point; otherwise, if we use it as a tyrant uses his slave, capriciously and wantonly, we do but the madman's work—we might as well attempt to lick a file smooth, or cut a block of stone with a razor—the only effect will be to blunt its edge, and unfit it for its proper purposes.

I paid the full penalty of my rashness; for a day or two I suffered cruelly. The sick headache, the crapula of the brain from its intellectual efforts, is worse twenty-fold than the more familiar one of the stomach, from drunkenness. No torment is like that of the abortive writer. Dante, among his horrors of hell, should have given the choicest place, the abyss of all abysses, to that most suicidal of self-tormentors—the man who would fain scale the heavens, by tearing up from the roots, and heaping together, the mountains of his own crazy imagination. The parallel will hold

to the end. The lightning is armed against him—the thunderstroke of paralysis overtakes him—withered, seared, and blasted, the intellectual aspirant sinks into the wreck of the idiot.

I was the more dismayed at such a failure, as I had never looked to the possibility of it. In Latin I could write decently. In Greek I could string together a few words and even sentences, grammatically, at least, if not classically. I knew that my use of English was much the most familiar of the three, and therefore I presumed that I could be at no loss in it. Here, however, I was mistaken. There are good reasons why English composition should be more difficult to the schoolboy than that in the dead languages. In the first place, he learns the last grammatically, and practises composition in them. He is less conscious of the feebleness and absurdity of his notions, when expressed in a dead language, than he would be in a spoken one—in the former therefore he is more confident; and, moreover, as he is not afraid of vulgarisms in Greek or Latin, he is in a great measure exempt while writing in them from the affectation of fine phraseology—that pestilent sin of young authors.

This first time of my experiment, I had worried myself through the day in my vain essays in authorcraft, till I felt as if all the fibres in my brain had been crossed and tangled together. This was not enough for me. I held out still, and carried my obstinacy so far as to make a solemn vow, that I would not go to bed that night until I had done my work. I made the vow, and I was driven to make it good also.



I contrived before morning, at the hazard of a nervous fever, to scribble some few pages of poor, feeble, jointless, spiritless composition. I would not rest even there. It was a glorious summer's day; and I fancied that the fresh air, the warm glow of the landscape, and the smilingness of nature, might renew the tone of my intellect by recruiting my spirits. In this hope, as soon as I was my own master, I sallied forth. I betook myself to a lonely wooded ridge, on the way to Datchet—the Lover's Walk I believe it was called—and there at its extremity, on a sort of headland, looking towards Eton, I threw myself on the bank, and endeavoured to reconcile my faculties to their task. Shortly after, I heard a rustling noise in a hedge at a little distance from me. I looked in that direction, and saw a little beggarly boy, without a hat, and scarce a rag over him, peeping and peering about for a bird's nest in a bush, with as much intenseness of interest as though he had expected to find his fortune there. The spectacle went at once to my heart. What a fool am I to sit here, "and strictly meditate the thankless muse," while even such an urchin as that has sense enough to follow out the impulses of nature, and find his enjoyment in them! Why should I take so much trouble only to make myself miserable? The suggestion, whether reasonable or not, was at least easy of execution. I got up, shook myself well, as if to bring my spirits to the surface, and throw off the damp-clinging influences collected there, and in a few short minutes was in one of Harry Carter's boats,

floating lazily down the stream, in a course typical of the one adopted by me for my future moral life.

I fancied that I had thrown off my attachment once and for ever; but how absolute was my delusion! The itch of writing, or, at least, that of meditating what we may write, if we think proper, is as inveterate as the itch of gambling,

*Ulcus enim vivescit et inveterascit alendo  
Inque dies gliscit furor atque sœmna gravescit.*

No man ever had a fit of it, but he had also a thousand relapses to follow it. Extricate one's self as one may for a moment, we are sure, in the strong language of the prophet, to be drawn back again as by the cart-ropes of destiny. I became subject to the rule, the common law, of authorship. In no very long time I resumed the habit of composition; I have worn it ever since, loosely, indeed, and familiarly, but yet, as far as my comfort is concerned, to good purpose. It has served me happily and well; I would not forego it, now that I know its worth, for all the wealth of the Indies: and here, after a sufficiently long use and experience, I give their results. If, indeed, there be any truth in the Greek adage, if suffering be really learning, then surely I must have learnt much, and those results may be of some value. My martyrdom, indeed, has not with me been the presage of my glorification. The crown has yet to be awarded to me; but the practice has been of signal service, nevertheless; I have learned from it to make the warm season of

youth the season of my moral confirmation and advancement; in the beautiful lines of the poet,

The mind to strengthen and anneal  
While on the stithy glows the steel.

This, and much more, have I done for my true happiness; and the reader, if he choose to take a lesson from my experience, may do the like; aye, more, he may obtain the crown of glory, without the martyrdom.

The art of composition depends altogether upon that of meditation; the two, in fact, are so closely allied as to be almost identified. By way of inducement, then, to composition, I shall begin with meditation, as the first in order.

An ingenious writer, D'Israeli, I believe, has somewhere affirmed that there is no book extant on the art of meditation. The accuracy of that author is well known, and there is no reason to suppose that it has failed him in this instance. At least, I have had access in my time to a reasonable number of catalogues and libraries, and, as I was long since sensible of the void, I have wasted many a half-hour in the search of some treatise on that subject. All that I ever found was a blank. I might as well have taken the word of D'Israeli.

But how should so excellent a faculty have remained so long in disregard? Certainly it is not in its universality, or even in its frequency, that we are to look for our solution. So far from it, not one man in a hundred is capable of following out or connecting a

chain of abstract reasoning. The access is through a narrow gate, and those who have striven in vain to enter are more numerous by far than those who have succeeded. Still less has this grand study been neglected from any general opinion of the inadequacy of its worth to its price of purchase. That thought is the key, and the only key, of all wisdom, and that the sun is author of our light, are alike truths of universal acceptance.

All this is clear and certain, and yet the art of meditation is without an expounder to this hour. The perverseness or vanity of students has attempted to raise to the dignity of science many other subjects, in themselves sufficiently vain and useless. In politics, philology, and polemical divinity, infinite labour has been exhausted, to little good purpose. Endless have been the speculations and furious the disputes on mathematical, geological, and hieroglyphical puzzles; while, in the midst of this contention, true wisdom, in our times, as formerly in those of Scripture, though she should raise her voice, and cry aloud in the streets, would be almost without a hearer. Yes, I can scarce credit my own conscience when I say it, the art of thinking, that first and noblest of our faculties; the one universal instrument at least, if it be not the essence, of the mind; the giver, under the Almighty, of all good gifts, moral as well as intellectual; the life and soul, in short, of our rational nature, is as little regarded by men, and as little valued, as the blessed light of their eyes, or breath of their nostrils—albeit, as important to their moral, as these latter in-

fluences are to their physical condition. This is an astounding certainty. Not but that treatises have been published, entitled, as it pleased the extravagant humour of their authors, "the art of thinking," but this being interpreted, is found to be nothing more than the art of reasoning technically, or, in other words, that of stringing propositions into syllogisms. But to expound this is one thing, and to expound the method of meditation is a far different one. As well, to use an illustration of Aristotle, might a man who should undertake to teach the craft of shoemaking pretend to redeem his promise by taking his apprentice into a shoemaker's shop, and showing him the stock that might happen to be set out there for sale.

To account for this, we should consider that the great bulk of mankind know nothing whatever of the art in question, are scarcely conscious even of its existence, and therefore can be in no concern about its neglect. It is not so with the greater number of the sciences, nor with any of the ordinary arts and handicrafts. In these, a man who is ignorant of them can compare his own condition with that of his neighbour who has mastered them. He sees something palpable and substantial in their processes and results. He is at no loss to attribute the effect to the cause—the success or failure of a mechanic, for instance, to his skill or ignorance in his craft; nor can he doubt the use of an acquirement, which he sees from day to day practically and profitably applied. Whereas, the art of thinking is only discernible in its results. It cannot

be said of it, Lo, here, or Lo, there. It is a talisman, as secret as it is powerful; working wonders, but working them imperceptibly to the eyes of the multitude. Moreover it is a thing *positum in medio*—it is open to all the world, and is therefore vainly believed, not only to be easy of attainment, but actually in the possession of every one. To hear the word used, to observe the levity and carelessness of its application, one would suppose that thinking, in the phrase of the old play, was as easy as lying; that one had only to call it, and it must needs come—to will it, and there it would be. Whereas, as Rousseau, who found the truth to his cost, somewhere observes, it is not only an art, but the most difficult as well as the most valuable of all. But then it shows itself by no external sign; it has no such stamp set upon it as to pass current with the vulgar; it has but little influence—necessarily, that is, and immediately—for the furtherance of worldly fortune. It is foreign to the lusts, and vanities, and fashions of mankind; and can we then wonder that, in common with faith, charity, and the whole host of Christian virtues, it is neglected by people who know nothing of its peculiar power, and find that they can get on in the world sufficiently well without it?

One might indeed have expected from speculative and philosophical men something more than acquiescence in the heedlessness of the vulgar. It has however so happened, that even the most curious inquirers into mental philosophy have thought it enough to proceed upon an hypothesis, presuming the faculty of meditation, and then reasoning and refining upon the

various subordinate powers, such as reflection, judgment, and many others, which depend upon that faculty. Whereas, the better course, in my opinion, is, in the first place, to ascertain, as far as may be, how the capital art, that of thinking, is to be acquired, and then, if it be worth our while, to go forward to the consideration of its incidents.

It is surprising how long people may live in the world and never think at all. In strictness, scarce one man in twenty can be said to have thought so much as once during the whole course of his life; that is, to have set himself to a subject, and reasoned it fairly out from its principles to its conclusion. This, to be sure, is done in mathematical demonstration—and even in the lowest form of it, that of common arithmetic—but there, as every step is a necessary one, and as discretion is not admitted, the process can scarcely be called thought, it is rather attention; a mere listening to truth, instead of uttering it; a watching of its formation, instead of actually forming it. However, the talent of attention and application is in itself a most valuable one, and this is conferred by such studies more generally than by any others. But as for the common actions of our life, we are governed in them almost entirely, not by our reasoning activity, but by habit and imagination. In business, in society, everywhere, in short, we speak and act so and so, from our experience of what other people have said and done in the like matter. We have a sort of floating mark, an average made up of numberless observations; and to that, by the mere

force of conformativeness, we adapt our practice. To borrow an illustration, we form our habits to the common rule, as we set our watches to the church-clock, without any strict inquiry as to its exactness, but rather in the consciousness that in things of indifference submission to the general rule is a greater merit than scepticism as to the reason of it. And if it ended here, if we were imitative only thus far, there would be no great mischief in it—on the whole, perhaps, rather an advantage—but the misfortune is, that by this habit of reliance on the common standard we get into the disuse of our reasoning faculty altogether; and from the disuse into the absolute loss of it. And hence, as to originaive thought, we are most of us become mere ciphers. And yet it is this originaive thought, and this only, that distinguishes science from art, reason from habit, the philosopher from the mere formalist, the man of mind from the child of circumstances.

As for myself, I am almost ashamed to confess how long it was before I began to think; in other words, before I rose from the boyhood into the manhood of intellect. And yet I was constantly in the practice of composition. For years together I had ordinarily three exercises in a week to make out. I did them, too, as well or better than most of my schoolfellows. And still I was no more a thinker than an angel.

I will endeavour to explain this by a repetition of the process. Suppose that I had to write an essay—the subject was ambition. I had only to ruminate on the word, and presently all sorts of images associated



with it would be offered to me. With a little more brooding, such of these ideas as had any particular affinity for each other would fall together, and frame themselves into some kind of regularity, as we see in crystallization. All this time I was passive, and had only to let the subject work in my mind, and clear itself before I committed it to paper. To give an illustration or two, I was no painter, but a mere joiner of painted bits into a frame of patchwork—a compiler—or, as the word means in Latin, a thief—a borrower of fine feathers, that might make a show upon me, but could never carry me through a flight. Undoubtedly I had a sort of instinctive sense of propriety, a vague notion of what Square would call the “fitness of things,” but this was a mere habit with me. I had been used to see such and such qualities so and so attributed, and I took the forms as I found them. I never troubled myself about the analysis. In short, I did all by imagination, and nothing by originative energy—by thought. I used my facts as forms, and not as mere materials to make into forms. And, besides this, my images floated on, as it might happen, slowly or rapidly, or not at all. I had no impulsive force, no oars to quicken them—no helm to guide them.

It was by a mere accident that I became a thinker at last. Otherwise I might have gone on to this day dreaming and imagining, and knowing nothing of the quickening influence, the strengthening discipline of thought. It was not till I had left Eton, and been some time at the University, that the light broke in

upon me. I am anticipating my subject, but it is better that the order of time should be interrupted than that the course of my narrative should be thrown out of joint. At that time I became acquainted with a set of men who regarded the University only as a field where they were come to sow their wild oats, *majorum more modoque*; as a sewer, rather, into which as a matter of course they were to play off the humours of their hot blood—their moral impurities. Drunkards were they, dog-fanciers, patrons of the ring, accomplished, in short, not “in all good grace to grace a gentleman,” but in all blackguardism to degrade him. Hard riders, but not hard readers. Men who knew as little of the inside of a lecture-room as Falstaff did of a church; and who held the senior wranglership to be the bathos of all human degradation. I was occasionally among them, but never a party to their outrageousness. I ran not with them to the same excess of riot. I was altogether of another spirit. I had not their forwardness and presumption, or I should probably have been as deep in viciousness as they were. One evening I had been playing cards with them; we made a late sitting of it, and, long before the party had broken up, daylight surprised us. The rest of them went off smoking, singing, and hallooing; as for me, I had no taste for their revelries, nor yet any disposition to go quietly to bed; as a *tertium quid* I took up a book, and amused myself for an hour or so with the memoirs of some celebrated men contained in it, and, among others, of Charles James Fox. I am one of those politicians who hold

the memory of that man in reverence, and happy I am to be still further beholden to him, for a private and personal reason. It is this: his biographer had given him credit for a quality not very likely, I should think, to have belonged to him—that of always thinking. “He never lost a moment,” so the account runs; “he was always thinking.” I suppose we are to understand by this, not that he was always engaged in actual thought—that is, in a course of inward reasoning—for this is an hyperbole of extravagance, but, that he was always in some way at work; attentive to some subject or object; never surrendering himself to the influence of languor, or depression, or laziness—a man, in short, of prevailing energy and activity.

I had often before been told to think. I had heard that I could never rise to greatness of mind by any other method, but the advice was lost upon me. I did not know the meaning of the word. I believed that musing was thinking, that castle-building was thinking, that recollecting was thinking; in short, that, if the mind were employed at all, it could only be in thinking. By this time, however, I had worn off those idle fancies. I had a general habitual notion of the truth. I had learnt to conclude, as the fact is, that thought is not in the mere occupation of the mind, but in its occupation and active exercise to a rational conclusion. This I knew, or rather, perhaps, I felt it; but, hitherto, I had rested upon the faith; I had never carried it out into practice, nor exemplified it by any regular series of operations in my own mind. Happily, at that moment, my understanding

was open and conciliatory; I was penetrated with the truth; I felt as if there were some magic in the words. Think always. I fancied that by observing and practising them I should rise into an upper region, a new life, a glorified existence.

With these impressions upon me I left the room, and went out into the open air. It was in Trinity College, Cambridge. As I entered the great square and looked around me upon the buildings, impressive alike from their antiquity, their imposing mass and extent, their character of moral rather than of architectural greatness, and, above all, from the associated glories of their inmates—of Newton, Bentley, and of one greater than either, Barrow; together with the liberal spirit of her sons, their love of light and progress, their calocagathia, whereby, even though no one “bright particular star” should excel among them, their College would yet shine forth as a general galaxy of brightness;—as I was feeding on these ideas, the thought occurred to me, Why should not I also be a partaker in their glories—a man of intellect? Why should I not at least try, some time or other—as soon as possible—at this moment? The last suggestion was the wisest. There is no moment like the present; not only so, but, moreover, there is no moment at all, that is, no instant force and energy, but in the present. The man who will not execute his resolutions when they are fresh upon him, can have no hope from them afterwards; they will be dissipated, lost, and perished in the hurry and skurry of the world, or sunk in the slough of indolence. This I

was wise enough to know. I had taken my text, "think always," and I had now to discourse upon it. The walks were just thrown open, and I went, "alone and pensive," to put my thoughts in train under the chestnut row of Trinity.

I chose some ethical subject from Paley, and endeavoured to work it out, *proprio Marte*. I had some leading notions upon it in my mind. They looked well enough and sure enough, as long as they remained in their places; but, as soon as I began to set them in motion, they fell into sad disorder, hampered each other, made a kind of blindman's buff of their game, and came to no proper issue—in short, I failed. I gave myself a moment's breathing time, and tried again, but failed still. For an hour together I kept stumbling and blundering on through a series of failures, and at last gave it up, and returned home discomfited. Afterwards from time to time, as I had occasion, I continued the practice, and nineteen times out of twenty with the same result. In fact, it is at first a very difficult thing—almost an impossible one, except in very rare cases—to think continuously. It is the harvest of mental cultivation. The seed is thrown in, and for a time is only in fermentation. A man of no experience would have no hope of it—the end is not yet; we should wait patiently until the ripeness of time, and so we shall make our profit.

On that occasion, as on many others after it, until I had paid the full price of my experience, I defeated my purpose by my over anxiety. I was diffident of myself. I entered upon my train of thought, not as a matter

of course, but as a task of difficulty and doubtfulness. This was not the way to succeed. Meditation comes not by constraint—like Love, so she also,

At sight of human ties,  
Spreads her light wings, and in a moment flies.

She is a virgin that can be won by those only who woo her with a smiling countenance. Whereas, I went to work with a frowningness of brow, an overbearingness of spirit, and a sentiment of arduous enterprize—just as if I were leading a forlorn hope to storm a fortress. This was mischievously devised—but it is our common mischief. Few are there among us all who can or will understand that excellence is the immediate offspring of ease, until they have learnt their lesson from the repetition of their agonies, through repeated violences against their nature, and of course as many entire failures. The absurdity of this is evident—but the evidence is only for those who can compare the one practice with the other. It is only from the vantage ground of truth that we can survey and trace out the labyrinth of our former errors. To look for thought upon compulsion is as unreasonable to the expert judgment as to expect a growth of flowers from the battery of the hail-storm, or the wooing of the east wind. It is to the kindness of the sun, the geniality of a warm atmosphere, and the mild influence of the April shower, that the earth will give forth its increase joyously and plenteously. Then, as the poet tells us, "*Laxant arva sinus.*" I am not sure that I have not mistaken the meaning of this passage. The

harvest, perhaps, is intended by it, and not the seed-time—but let that pass. I will only add, that the regulation of our intellect and that of our religion depend in very many cases upon the same rules, and in this remarkably so. When we are brought to the “session of sweet silent thought,” we should take no care, we should not *efforce* ourselves, to borrow a French word, as to what we are to say or write—the spirit itself should dictate to us in that hour.

Rousseau tells us in his “Confessions” that his best thinking hours were invariably his walking hours also; that his bodily motion—*ebranla*—stirred into activity his mind, set ago the movement of his mental clockwork. He was in the habit, principally from this persuasion, of making long tours on foot into distant regions—intellectual pilgrimages, like those religious ones of old, made by our devout forefathers. His spiritual and corporeal man were in absolute sympathy. When his body was inert so was his mind also.

For myself, I have no faith in the analogy; else must I believe, perforce, that the clown should be of finer wit than the harlequin. But, in good simple truth, it was not so with me when I was a boy, with a fund of spirits as inexhaustible as the rich man’s melancholy; still smaller is the likelihood of it in these my instant days, when my oil, so far from overflowing, suffices just, and but barely, to save my poor little light from sinking into darkness. This analogy is a weapon of two edges, a thing of back-handed use, a self-quarreling kind of creature; one

may pit one against the other, and see them pick each other's eyes out. And here I believe it to be false—For instance, observe Dame Partlet; she is a wise old soul; she sits brooding and brooding on, heedless of impertinences, and would sooner crush all her hopes into a yellow mess than leave her incubancy but for a moment—and so I brood over my thoughts; otherwise, the eggs in the one case, and in the other my poor brain, if either were stirred superfluously, must infallibly become addle. Pity that I am no parson, else I should be as good an incumbent as the laziest of them. Away with your kittenish alacrity! such gambolers are no good mousers—watchfulness it is, and patience, and acquiescence, that does the business. Station, state, and understanding, with all their derivatives, are words of honour, and by them I stand zealously—*verbo tenus*; albeit politically an agitator—one addicted to the movement. But for my peculiar experience, when I am in my good arm-chair, with my books and pictures around me, my fire flickering before me, my fancy stirring within, and my reason, like my outward eye, in a kind of twilight existence—then I am in my Paradise. At such times, to move me would be death at once to my quickening conceptions—a sort of intellectual infanticide.

However at that time I was full of Rousseau. I had just been reading his *Emile*, and, as I took almost everything from him on trust, I carried on my peripatetic course a little further. By-the-by, that same course might have led to very prosperous issues, practised as it was in the old Athenian groves by Aristotle,



Plato, and their followers; but their walks were conversational; they took their turns at the subject, and lighted from each other's lamps; or, to speak more properly, struck their lights out from collision; but this is a very different thing from the continuation of thought by a single mind, and, moreover, a much easier one. I speak here of novices—of the apprenticeship to thought; as for those who are practised in it, who are become thorough thinkers, they can command themselves and their subjects at all times and places. They are above the hurry and skurry of this nether world, or at least can rise above it when they please. The camp, city, or church, the court, or cloister, are all one to them for their purpose.

And so I set myself again to think in walking—a much more difficult achievement for a beginner than to shoot flying, though easy enough to the proficient. Like Bellerophon in the Aleian fields, I used to wander about literally, as it is in the Greek, consuming my own mind, avoiding the tread of men. The consumption would have been complete, had I continued obstinately to force my own resources. But I had found by this time that I had not capital enough to trade upon—no original moving power sufficient to set my mental machinery at work, and so to keep it. Very wisely, then, I condescended to draw upon other funds, to avail myself of adminicular help in my scramble up an ascent so steep. Upon this hint, I determined to take to myself some archetype; to lay up in my memory the outline and main features of some argument or essay; and then, after the lapse of

time, to endeavour to reproduce them—in short, as the lawyers say, to draw from precedent. Hume's history was my model; if, indeed, it deserves to be called a history, when one might designate it more justly by dividing the word, and describing it as *his*, that is, Hume's story. However, there were plenty of facts, or pretended facts given, and plenty of reflections to be supplied—it was therefore well enough for my particular purpose, though for its own general one it is good for mighty little.

I entered upon my course of experiments, following in the main, but occasionally varying, and supplying, and enlarging the plan before me, or, I should say, my remembrance of it. This in itself is an exceedingly useful practice, but it was then above my power, and beyond the point of my advancement. The result was a necessary one; nine times out of ten I failed in my endeavour.

It was a perpetual up-hill strain to me; a real Sisyphean labour. There was not motive enough in my meditation to attain the point, whence it would have gone on of itself smoothly and steadily along an inclined plane; but down it would come, as soon as the effort of its emission was spent, in all the deadness of its weight, upon its author. I was unable to sustain myself. The fact is, that the source of my thought was not deep nor copious enough to supply such a stream as could make its way onward against the counteracting influence of ideas from without, of external repellents.

Some great river in America, the Oroonoco I think,

is said to flow into the sea with such a mighty rush of waters as to beat back the currents of the Atlantic leagues before it, and spread itself far and wide into the ocean. So does every great mind, but so did not mine. This perpetual warfare, this conflict between the sea and river, is nobly described by Scott in *Rokeby*,

Where Oroonoco in his pride  
Hurls on the main no tribute tide;

but I have not the book in my possession, nor the lines in my memory. Something of the same kind, and still more to my purpose, is said of the arrowy Rhone, and its passage clear, distinct, and impetuous, like that of a javelin in the air, through the lake of Geneva.

This is the very perfection of thought—to fly with an assured flight, holding itself together, free from all diffusion, and from all mixture of collateral ideas or influences, and darting like a comet into space with its luminous track behind it, never to return until its full range, its appointed period, be completed. *Hic labor hoc opus est.* But this is a giant's work. We may go on to say with the poet,

Panci quos æquus amavit  
Jupiter, aut ardens evexit ad æthera virtus,  
Diis geniti, potuere.

I was not of the elect. There was a law in my members, in my outward senses that is, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing it into captivity. Gradually I used to fall back into my passiveness. Like

the Galatians, I began in the spirit and ended in the flesh.

I need hardly say that, as long as I followed this study, I followed it in solitude. I might have been advised better. Could I have gained the fruits of experience without its process, I should have done otherwise; as I am persuaded that conversation, grounded of course on previous reading and reflection, is the best method of advancement for the novice. I have said as much elsewhere, and given my reasons for the sentence. I have only now to regret that my wisdom in this respect was of so late growth, that it came lagging in after the consummation of much mischief that it might have prevented.

Be this as it may, I fancied at that time that the searcher after wisdom, like the digger for hidden treasure, according to the vulgar superstition, must work in silence and in solitude. This then was my method: I sequestered myself as much as possible; I avoided the busy hum of men, and gave myself up, for "all custom of exercise," to walks by the river-side, or along some remote village footpath. Here I had my own way; but, with all this artifice of abstraction, I found that I had not yet force enough for the exercise of continuous thought, the mastery of my mind. Nor was it merely that I failed, but my failure was a mischievous one; the violence of my efforts did me a positive injury. After the ill success of these experiments, I felt that my mind was strained, as one's arm may be by a blow aimed rashly, and spent idly in the air.

On this point I have a piece of advice to offer to all young intellectual aspirants: they should keep their crudities to themselves; they should not produce their notions until they have wrought them into form. I did the contrary of this myself, and I smarted severely for it. In the first place, I used to confuse myself with the perplexity of my thoughts—half-conceptions, abortions of truth, that came to the birth when my mind had not strength to bring them forth—monsters begotten out of the cloud, like those in the old fable. With Cassio, I saw a mass of things, but nothing distinctly. I had chosen my own points of observation; I viewed many things differently from the vulgar, but my visions for some time, until my eye was accustomed to the change, were wont to float before me vaguely and inapprehensibly. I had rejected the hack-notions, the uses of other men, and had as yet made none for myself that I could call properly my own. What then would have been my wisdom? Clearly, to reserve these rough sketches of my intellect for secret service, and not to set them forth for show; to veil from the vulgar eye the unseemliness of my mind, while in its rudiments; to employ it in its “airy portraiture” for exercise, in order that it might so learn to labour finally for use; just as the young painter will work off a hundred sketches for the fire, before he can finish one for public exhibition. In the mean time I should have holden to the old adage, “*loquendum ut vulgus, sentiendum ut docti.*” I should have talked and demeaned myself like mere matter-of-fact men, until I felt that I had

risen to the level of men of mind, and had attained the mastery of their method. I should have let my raw fruit hang and sun itself upon the tree, till it was penetrated with ripeness, and would come away easily upon the touch of a little finger. I ought not to have torn it off violently and with difficulty, while its humours were yet crude, to the laceration of the parent tree, the torture of my own inward man. But I was not then so philosophical as my after-experience has made me. I was only anxious to get on, and in that anxiety, as usually happens, I made much more haste than good speed.

I have said that at my best, even when I was alone, I was but a futile thinker. This being so, if I could not make myself a fair game when I was playing alone, with the cards in my own hands to deal and distribute at my pleasure, there was but small hope that I should be more successful when I had to contend, as in society, against the ordinary chances and set antagonists. Nevertheless, I adventured myself; I forced my owliness into the glare; I brought my pigs, such as they were, starved, shapeless weaklings, into the market of society. I got the habit, and there is no viler one upon earth, of uttering sententious sayings upon mere trifles, of building heavily upon the sticks and straws of conversation. I was always labouring to sound deep, even where the channel of discourse was itself shallow; and, of necessity, all that I got for my pains was to stir up the mud from the bottom, and obscure the stream by my sheer leaden stupidity. Like a fond and foolish father, I forgot

that though I might be interested in my callow speculations, merely because they were my own, yet something else was required—some stamp of sterling merit—to recommend them to the acceptance of others. This was wanting. It was in vain that I endeavoured to pass off my rude ore as current coin—no one would accept it; and probably the urgency of my tender only procured me the advantage of a doubtful reputation—either that I was half a madman or wholly a fool. Hence, I was continually on the fret; vexed with myself, dissatisfied with others; distracted by a threefold warfare—intestine, social, and external.

It is from this propensity of young thinkers to overstrain their reach, at the hazard of all kinds of ridiculous falls and failures, that many people have got the notion that a man of high intellect is almost invariably a strange, uncomely, untoward, offensive, and captious creature, one of the *genus irritabile*—a wasp in temper. This is a thorough mistake. I never in my life knew a man of high intellect who was not withal kind, agreeable, ready-witted, and, above all, highly amiable. It is scarce possible that it should be otherwise. A machine that works well cannot fail to work smoothly and pleasantly. We are not apt, while we are playing a winning game, to lose either our temper or our presence of mind. A man of genius indeed may chance to be fretful and unconventional, as some few of them certainly are; but then he must be a rude, undisciplined genius—a man of high intellect he can hardly be. It is your ambitious novice, your scrambler up the ascent, that is so generally

during his probation a stumbling, slipping, nervous and fretful blunderer; all this for a very simple reason—because he is never sure of his ground, and therefore cannot command himself. It is only in the process of transformation that the creature is feeble and purblind, inconsistent, purposeless, and helpless. This sort of imperfection is a middle term; the lower as well as the higher natures, the vulgar and intellectual, are alike exempt from it. We may say of it what Cowley has said so admirably of something else—

Vain shadow, which doth vanish quite,  
Both at full noon and perfect night.

But to return to my meditative processes, and to their effects; I continued to practise them in solitude but to little good purpose. Never were patience and perseverance more severely proved. Often after I had endeavoured for hours together to think a subject out, with no other result but a headache, the throes and pangs of the labouring brain without its delivery, I determined to throw the chances up, and live carelessly, after the fashion of my fellows. But I could never enforce the edict; the restraining power was invariably too strong. It often happens that, when we relinquish a good principle, its attractive force increases in proportion as we withdraw from it. Our regrets are aggravated into remorse. It is no vain imprecation that of the poet,

*Virtutem videant, intabescantque relictâ,*

and it is one frequently realized.!



Accordingly I went on in my old practices some time longer. I had chosen a fitting scene for them; my *genius loci* was a congenial one. There is a village called Cherry-Hinton, lying wide of any highway, and within two or three miles of Cambridge. The footpath to it is crossed midway, or thereabouts, by a little brook, and that brook itself, accompanied by a pathway, winds its unambitious way onward to the village, through certain rich cornfields and solitary meadows. This was my usual walk, my path of contemplation. From some unaccountable neglect, it was very little frequented, though in itself as pretty as any out of Cambridge. Scarcely was it trodden, save by a few late and early marketgoers, and, haply, now and then a milkwoman. *Vilia delectant vulgus*; the dusty footpath, with the chance of an occasional gossip, was more to the taste of the commonalty than the modest half-worn track, the verdure, the coolness, the sequestration—in a word, the poetry, of my own choice. I was in no danger of interruption by my sporting friends, who would have stared at me in such a spot as if they had seen a ghost, and regarded me ever afterwards as a man under a cloud—as one addicted to strange solitary habits.

I remember one day I had racked myself out of all patience in my attempts to overthink a subject, to master it by the sheer force of thought. In a state of exhaustion and discomfiture I leant against a gatepost, and suffered my sight to rest upon the surface of the stream, and amuse itself by the objects carried down by it. There was an angle of the bank close by,

and I indulged myself some time in the idle speculation, whether or not the sticks and straws that I saw floating along might chance to double it. My mind was martyred with its distractions, and it occurred to me, by a sudden thought, that here was a way to put an end to them. I marked a particular straw in its descent, and made an earnest vow, that, accordingly as it should pass the promontory or fail to do so, I would persist or not in my thoughtfulness—that, as the straw might rule me, I would strive onwards through a host of pains and penalties, or else retire at once from the contest, and, as the negroes say, “sit down softly,” content to be a common man—one of the mere vulgar.

My determination was strong at the moment—so strong, that I am by no means sure that it was not decisive, that it has not governed my destinies ever since. Well, I watched my pilot-boat as it came down—*Fortunam vehis*—so I might have apostrophized it, in all Cæsarian dignity. It passed gently on. Here and there it met with an obstruction, but it was only for a moment; it doubled the cape—the Cape of Good Hope, as it really was for me. I received the augury with all acceptance, and returned with a light heart.

Somehow or other after this incident, whether by force of it or from whatever cause, I got into a better vein. I abandoned once for all the part of the self-tormentor. I forbore to force myself. I suffered my mind, like a froward child, to fall asleep, and so recover itself from the excitement of its frowardness.

Instead of hallooing on when I had overrun the scent, I drew back quietly and cannily to the point where I was last sure of it—*relegens errata retrorsum*—and endeavoured to hit it off afresh. I returned from thought to literature; from my late hard taskmaster to my former gentle mistress. I read at large. I roved about at my free will in the wide and varied common of our College library, with no other condition than that of commenting in my own mind, as I went along, upon every book that I might be reading, and every chapter of that book. This was the best restorative process imaginable. I soon got heart of grace upon it, and recruited the exhaustion of my spirits. I found it was but lost pains to attempt to add a cubit to my intellectual stature by force of thinking. I took better counsel, and resigned all care of my growth to time, patience, and steady, but gentle perseverance. "*Chi va piano*," say the Italians, "*va lontano*," and I soon found that instead of racking myself to no purpose, as I had done heretofore, I was gradually making way, and widening my circle.

My wayfarings to this village of fruitful, though, for anything that I could ever learn, fallacious entitlement—this village with a name that waters on one's tongue, though it keeps not the word of promise to one's palate—my pilgrimages, I say, thither were of good account to me through another mere accident. One day, on my return, I was driven to take shelter from a rainstorm in a little hovel by the road-side—a sort of cobbler's stall. The tenant and his son were upon their work, and, after the customary use of greet-

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ings, I entered familiarly into talk with them, as indeed I always do, seeing that your cobbler is often a man of contemplative faculty—that there is really something of mystery in his craft. Before I had been with them long, the old man found that there lacked something for his work, and in order to provide it he sent his son out on a job of some five minutes. The interval was a short one, but it was too long for his active impatience; he became uneasy, shuffled about the room, and at last took up a scrap or two of leather and fell to work upon them. “For,” said he, “it will never do, you know, sir, to be idle—not at any rate—I should faint away.”

I happened just then to be in an impressible mood, without occupation myself, and weighed somewhat down by the want of it; accordingly the phrase, the oddness of it in the first place, and still more the sense, made a deep and lasting impression upon me. As soon as the rain had spent itself, I went my way homeward, ruminating and revolving what I had heard, like a curious man over a riddle. I could not have bestowed my thoughts better; the subject concerned me nearly, it went to the very heart of my happiness. Some people are perpetual martyrs to idleness, others have only their turns and returns of it; I was of the latter class—a reluctant impatient idler; nevertheless I was so much within the mischief as to feel that the words came home to me. They stung my conscience severely, they were gall and wormwood for me. Nevertheless I dwelt so long, albeit perhaps unwillingly, upon the expression, that

I became as it were privy to it, I was in a condition to feel and revere its efficacy ; I determined to make much of it, to realize it in use, to act it out.

I had heard and read repeatedly that idleness is a very great evil, but the censure did not appear to me to come up to the real truth. I began to think that it was not only a very great evil, but the greatest evil—and not only the greatest one, but in fact the only one—the only mental one I mean ; for of course, as to morality, a man may be very active, and very viciously active too. But the one great sensible and conceivable evil is that of idleness. No man is wretched in his energy. There can be no pain in a fit ; a soldier at the full height of his spirit, and in the heat of contest, is unconscious even of a wound ; the orator in the full flow of rhetoric is altogether exempt from the pitifulness of gout and rheumatism. 'To be occupied, in its first meaning, is to be possessed as by a tenant—and see the significancy, the reality, of first meanings. When the occupation is once complete, when the tenancy is full, there can then be no entry for any evil spirit ; but idleness is emptiness ; where it is, there the doors are thrown open, and the devils troop in.

The words of the old cobbler were oracular to me. They were constantly in my thoughts, like the last voice of his victim in those of the murderer ; my mind was pregnant with them ; the seed was good, and sown in a good soil—it brought forth the fruit of satisfaction.

It is the odds and ends of our time, its orts and offals, laid up, as they usually are, in corners, to rot

and stink there, instead of being used out as they should be—these, I say, are the occasions of our moral unsoundness and corruption ; a dead fly, little thing as it is, will spoil a whole box of the most precious ointment ; and idleness, if it be once suffered, though but for a brief while, is sure, by the communication of its listless quality, to clog and cumber the clockwork of the whole day. It is the ancient enemy—the old man of the Arabian Tales. Once take him upon your shoulders, and he is not to be shaken off so easily.

I had a notion of these truths, and I framed my plan after their rules ; I resolved that every minute should be occupied by thought, word, or act, or, if none of these, by intention ; vacancy was my only outcast, the scape-goat of my proscription. For this my purpose, I required a certain energy of will, as indeed this same energy is requisite for every other good thing of every sort and kind ; without it we are as powerless as grubs, noisome as ditch-water, vague, loose, and unpredestinate as the clouds above our heads. However, I had sufficient of this energy to serve me for that turn ; I felt the excellence of the practice, I was penetrated with it through all my being, I clung to it, I cherished it. I made a point of everything ; I was active, brisk, and animated (oh ! how true is that word) in all things that I did, even to the picking up of a glove, or asking the time of day. If I ever felt the approach, the first approach, of the insidious languor, I said at once within myself, In the next quarter of an hour I will do such a thing and, *presto*, it was done—and much more than that into the bargain ; my mind was set in

motion, my spirits stirred and quickened, and raised to their proper height. I watched the cloud, and dissipated it at its first gathering, as well knowing that, if it could grow but to the largeness of a man's hand, it would spread out everywhere, and darken my whole horizon.

Oh that this example might be as profitable to others as the practice has been to myself! How rich would be the reward of this book, if its readers would but take it to heart in this one article; if the simple truths that it here speaks could prompt them to take their happiness into their own hands, and learn the value of industry, not from what they may have heard of it, but because they have themselves tried and felt it! In the first place, its direct and immediate value—inasmuch as it quickens, and cheers, and gladdens every moment that it occupies, and keeps off the evil one by repelling him at the outposts, instead of admitting him to a doubtful, perhaps a deadly, struggle in the citadel; and again its more remote, but no less certain, value—as the mother of many virtues, when it has once grown into a temper of the mind; and the nursing mother of many more. And if we gain so much by its entertainment, how much more must we not lose by its neglect! Our vexations are annoying to us, the disappointments of life are grievous, its calamities deplorable, its indulgences and lusts sinful, but our idleness is worse than all these, and more painful, and more hateful, and in the amount of its consequences, if not in its very essence, more sinful than even sin

itself; just as the stock is more fruitful than any branch that springs from it. In fine, do what you will, only do something, and that actively and energetically. Read, converse, sport, think, or study, the whole range is open to you, only let your mind be full, and then you will want little or nothing to fulfil your happiness.

I found, after a short practice, that I was making some considerable way in my new method—my method of gentleness and good-will. Had I tried it to the utmost, had I gone with it the full length that it could have carried me, I should have become probably at the conclusion an elegant scholar, a man of taste and judgment in my particular pursuits of general learning and literature; in short, as our grandfathers would have said, an ingenious man. But I should have been nothing more. After the experience that I have just mentioned, I was still very far indeed from the mastery of my mind, the power of doing what I would with my own, the ready use, and, much more, the complete command of my faculties. Never, in short, could I so have attained the prerogative of high talent, nor have I attained it even now. True, most true. But the path has been open to me. The default has been that of my own tardiness, my neglect to pursue it steadily and perseveringly when I had once entered upon it.

I had observed that I thought upon a subject most readily when I undertook to speak upon it—that my thinking and speaking powers were in close alliance. But the observation was not a pregnant one; it produced



nothing; it was good, but to no good purpose; had I carried it out, it might have gone far to explain the whole mystery, but there it lay, and I made no use of it. As to the fact itself, I would just mention that it is of no unfrequent experience. It happens oftentimes that your orator is bad at composition; Fox, Curran, Erskine, and a host of others, could make no more than a very poor show of their strength when they drew it out on paper. In fact, it would be difficult to name half-a-dozen great orators, who have been great writers also. The difference of the two methods is this—the speaker requires excitement. Like a watch, if he be but wound up to a certain pitch, he will go for hours together. Whatever he may have in him, if he have confidence withal, it is pretty sure to be developed, and even expanded into a larger amplitude than its own. His spirit rises to the height—the arduousness if you will—of his enterprize. The consciousness of his situation is a spur to him. The fellow-feeling of his audience, the impression that he makes upon them, induce him to go on. His mind is prompted by his voice; the energy of his language, the force and variety of his intonations, carry him beyond his ordinary self; the breath of popular applause fans him into a blaze. Whereas, if you shut up the same man in his own room, you bring the spirit of the captive over his mind. His forces fall back upon him, his imagination becomes torpid, the current of his thoughts is brought to a dead pause. Leave him to his meditations, and you leave him for the most part to mere vacancy. His vein flows no

longer. The light of the public eye, the spark of public sympathy that should fire the train, is withdrawn from him—and so he sinks into darkness.

We see that the same thing is perpetually taking place even in conversation. It is true that we think in words, and therefore all good thinkers (barring excessive nervousness from disuse of society or unfitness for it) are sure to be good talkers. But we may be very tolerable talkers, and yet no thinkers at all. Witness all the daughters of Eve, the whole “regne of feminie.” Give them but an impulse from without, and they will go on interminably. No matter how slight the motive, a hair-trigger will discharge them, the merest hint of gossip will set them off—but a motive, an external motive, they must have. They can no more reason by themselves than they can produce children. I am speaking of the general rule, and I am content of course to make all due allowance for the exceptions.

To fall back upon my poor self:—one would have supposed that this result should have set me upon inquiring into the cause, and upon strengthening it, when I had found it out, by a frequent repetition of it. While I was training myself to think, I should have taken care in the first trials to choose only rhetorical subjects—subjects that might warm my heart and excite my faculties, and so raise me up to a fair starting point. This being provided, I should have taken the character of a speaker; I should have acted at first what I intended to do in earnest afterwards; I should have practised my mind on round where it could go

readily and easily ; I should have run it in a groove until I found that I could work its machinery, and then to the high-roads. All this I might have done, and should have done. But experience is a thing of posthumous birth, an *ex post facto* wisdom ; it comes when all is done, with the preposterousness of its saws and sentences. It was too late for my service ; but I commend it with all earnestness of commendation to that of others.

I have proceeded thus far with the progress of my meditative faculty, but here I must stop short. To go yet further just now would be to anticipate too much. The development of my mind is the consummation of my book. To give the catastrophe before the close is to mar the plot altogether ; to break the back of my story, and force it on afterwards like a wounded snake, cumbrously and trainingly,—

Oh 'twere as tedious as is a twice told tale,  
and as all the other items of tediousness enumerated by Shakspeare. I say then, let everything, and this among the rest, abide its time. The end is not yet. The course of my narrative will bring me on to it in due season.

I have scattered here and there some hints about a certain instinct of developement, a consciousness of power that I felt and could not rest for it, but was always fitful and impatient until I had done it justice. I have also spoken of certain essays, and those very far short of complete success, whereby I would fain have carried out this instinct to its issue ; as for instance, in the way of English prose composition,

oratory, and sundry others. Once or twice, too, about this time, just as the bloom was upon me, in my sixteenth or seventeenth year, I tried my hand at versification, and with no such ill effect. I have yet one or two scraps of poetry, as well genuine as translated, laid up in my memory; wine from my own vineyard, smothered, and so best preserved in all the zest of its raciness, by the saw-dust, the dry minute saw-dust, of my legal studies. Poetry I called it—aye, and real poetry it is; it leaves the right savour upon the palate; it breathes the true spirit. But strange to say—for this generally is a fashion that wears the spring out, and lasts far into the summer—I never persevered long in it, though nobody is more passionate for poetry than I am, or was, rather, for now it is only the affection that one feels for one's first love, when one has been years married to a second. My abandonment—I do not mean of the love, Heaven forbid! but of the courtship—was partly I believe from selfishness—from a notion that I had, and not a very wrong one either, that to succeed in poetry—I mean according to a moderate measure of success, and I could never have reached any higher—was the way to fail, aye, almost infallibly, in the world. I did not then know how great, how magnificent, how archangelic a nature is that of the true poet; how high, aye high above all other dignities upon earth, save that of virtue itself—wherewith, moreover, it has much closeness of communion and not a little of identity. Besides, I was obliged every week to write a copy of Latin verses, and so was practised in the craft.

Whereas, of English I had no use, and therefore comparatively small skill; I might well have said it absolutely, but no matter. However, I left the practice off. I enjoyed it, but freely, and at my own pleasure. I was never brought to make a mistress of it. Upon this abandonment I gave myself up by way of variety, but, oh! what a falling off was there—to music? no; to gamesomeness or debauchery? not at all; to reading loose books, to flute-puffing, or fiddle-scraping?—no, to none of these—but what then? simply, to play-acting.

Somebody has said, and he too a man of mark, if I am not mistaken, that play-writing is the highest effort of genius. There I must put in my protest—I always understood that prerogative to belong to poetry; but if he had said, as no less a personage than Lord Bacon actually lays it down, that play-acting is one of the best exercises of genius, I should not have ventured to gainsay him. It is good in its proper use for all the reasons that rhetorical exercises are good, and for some besides; albeit, as I admit, nothing is more execrably bad in its abuse. It is a good handmaid, but the worst of all possible mistresses. It is the only thing I know that is worth while to do, and yet better to do indifferently than perfectly well. I mean for one's own sake, not of course for that of one's audience, and I am speaking of its effect on very young people.

What they want principally is accommodativeness and confidence, a deliberate, undertoned, modest, and deep-seated confidence, conscious of its own deficiencies, and determined to supply them; and both these good

qualities are likely to accrue to them from the practice of acting, when used fairly and discreetly. But the effect must depend very much on the disposition of the subject. If a boy be orderly and modest, the practice works well upon him ; but, if he be confident of himself, the more chances are there that it will puff up his confidence into self-conceit—aye, and arrogance intolerable. This kind of confidence is as mischievous as the other is good ; instead of aiming at anything above it, it is full of its self-inflated merits, and cares for nothing else ; it rests upon what it has got, and makes much of it, and of itself also on the strength of it—as the French say, “*pourtant il se fait valoir ;*” it contrives to get credit upon a very little—just as the juggler seems to multiply his balls by his dexterous management of them—and therefore it is in no concern to acquire a great deal ; it is entirely satisfied with itself, and of course can never get beyond itself. This sort of confidence is a very pestilence of both heart and mind ; there is no hope of it. It is like varnish spread upon a picture before the colours are well fixed—it spoils its subject infallibly ; and, where the disposition to it exists, nothing is more likely to realize it, to degrade the boy into a mannikin, than this mania of acting.

But it so happened that I was never of this category. On the contrary, shyness and nervousness were main constituents of my nature. The quality of my clay required much kneading ere it could be moulded to any use ; accordingly I became an actor, and was put through many parts to my very signal benefit.

In the first place, I got rid, in a great measure, of my reserve; I was obliged to talk boldly, and strut boldly, and laugh boldly, and gesticulate boldly: all this I did, and not very much amiss. In fact the most nervous men are not unfrequently, when forced into action, the most daring and decisive. Their nervousness arises generally from an excess of feeling, and that excess, when thrown into a special channel, may carry head far onward, sharply and impetuously. To be short, I had my turn whether as emperor, lord, peasant, or waiter at an inn. I took things as they came, from the diadem to the fool's feather, and used them contentedly, according to the nature of their use—and this as a boy. Would that in after life I had played my part as philosophically. Extremes, they say, suggest each other. The fact undoubtedly is so, and may serve me as an excuse for passing, as I intend now to do, from the subject last in discussion to another the most opposite to it.

It may have been a matter of surprise that I should never anywhere throughout this work have dwelt upon the subject of religion, barely even so much as touched upon it; but taken my stand there, assuredly I never have. And this in a book on self-instruction! as if religious feeling were not to the full as necessary to the life of the soul, as the soul is to the life of the body; as if the mind itself without it could be anything more than a machine—a machine it may be, and often is, of exquisite cunning, and most marvellous operation, but still a palpable machine, and one of mere worldly mechanism, the creature of man himself, and

the one only thing created by him, bearing upon its face, and throughout its composition, no single token of divinity, no stamp of the Almighty, not a mark whereby he might claim it for his own—in short, a mere human invention.

This I believe is true, and the truth implies the severest of all possible censures on me, or my instructors. But it must be spoken nevertheless. I am not exhibiting myself as a model; I profess nothing more than simply to draw after the life. The fact is, that at that time, and long afterwards, I had no real concern with religion. How was it possible that I should? The good things of the spirit come not but with culture, and my mind for these purposes had hitherto been a mere waste. Of course my religious exercises of the nursery, my repetition of collects and the like, must go for nothing. They were far too abstruse for me. They were not that sincere milk of the Word, recommended by the Apostle as the only fit aliment of children. If they had any effect at all, it was only to connect the idea of religion in my mind with that of restraint and drudgery, an association afterwards much strengthened by the Eton practice of requiring from the boys attendance at chapel on the morning and evening of every holiday, as if the authorities there had been determined that our holidays should be given us in the etymological sense only, and not in the popular one. However this may be, I recommend the practice to their revision. They might think it to be good, but we boys, who were the only parties concerned, knew it to be most mischievous; we felt it



so then, and we judge it so now, advisedly and deliberately.

On the whole, then, I was entirely irreligious ; I do not mean antireligious—I would not have it supposed that the leaven of infidelity was at work within me ; but I knew nothing whatever, and cared nothing, and thought nothing about real religion ; I was utterly indifferent to it, and indifference in things of religion is the worst of all possible conditions. If a man hate it, it may yet be well with him. The truth of it is so powerful, and so beautiful, and so lovely withal, that, if we only feel at all towards it, we are almost certain to feel right at last ; but indifference gives no hold, it is a mere negative cypher, nothing can be done with it.

It is true I had an abhorrence of infidelity. I shuddered at the very name of any notorious free-thinker as at the sight of a toad or serpent. But I took it altogether upon trust, it was a mere aversion—a very different thing, of course, from a rational opposition. And again, as on the one hand I execrated infidelity, so also on the other, in order to keep my balance even, and hold the middle course of worldliness, I liked what I called Methodism full as little—I might have said much less, and so been a good deal nearer to the truth. Infidelity, in point of fact, concerned me, abstractedly considered, very little. I could talk with a Turk or Persian, and think none the worse of him for his religion. It was an evil of a thousand miles off—a report of the plague in China, or of the cholera in Hindostan ; as Homer says, there

were very many darkly wooded mountains and bellowing seas between us; but Methodism was something intolerable to me, a plant of home growth, spreading and waxing under my eyes, stinking under my very nostrils, and so much the more so, and the more despitely, as it was used scornfully, and crushed and trampled under my feet.

What business had they with so much of the commodity? They were debasing its estimation; cheapening it by throwing such a glut upon the market. I held religion to be a sort of cordial, a thing to be used occasionally among one's friends and acquaintances, to be kept by one in case of a sudden alarm, to be had in readiness against extreme sicknesses, appropriate by long custom for death-bed rooms and before funerals, but as a solitary habit I took it to be fraught with danger, worthy of all solemnity of reprobation.

In fact I was unreasonable, because I felt, though I pretended not to know, that religion and worldly service were no yoke-fellows. They would not draw together, I must dismiss one or the other of them. Habit, example, prejudice, prevailed against the truth; my selfishness was alarmed. Why should they be always working to make me wiser and better against my will? a pest upon their meddling officiousness!—and so all that I have most loved and cherished is to pass for nothing—worse even than that, to be renounced as lust and vanity, the lure of the precious soul, the instrument of the devil! Such a sacrifice was too much for me; I could not bring myself to forego my

pride, and worldliness, and vain knowledge, and be content to receive the kingdom of Heaven as a little child. But the alternative was open; I chose the other side—the evil part. I decided vainly, and wilfully, and wrongfully, and therefore the more obstinately.

In this state of mind, to read a really pious book, to hear the conversation, or observe the conduct of a pious person, was the bitterness of wormwood to me. I could not endure that the single safe refuge of such an one should be better worth to him than all the twists, and turns, and tricks that worldly discipline could teach me; I was aware that the light of their lamp made my darkness the more visible, and I hated it accordingly. My tortuousness of practice and of purpose was convicted and condemned by their simple rule of faith; it is no wonder, then, that their image was intolerable to me, that I could not be easy in their presence.

That such people should be so presumptuous, that they should preclude us by their example from the hopeful plea of ignorance, that they should set the standard of Christianity so high as to expose their brethren to fall short of it, and consequently to fail of their salvation, was in my poor judgment the most damnable of all heresies. I was well enough content with the religion of the Bishops, taken, I mean, as a whole—as their doctrine is corrected by their practice; and the Christianity of the wealthier clergy I thought very gentlemanlike; but as for that of the Gospel and the Apostles, I could only count it among the miracles; as a thing to be adored rather than

imitated, to be revered like the ark, not unto the laying of hands upon it, but at a respectful distance; seeing that it appertains not to our lowliness to trespass on the heavenly perfections, especially as our clergy, who study these things so deeply, have spent their whole zeal upon the study, and give us not the warrant of their example to practise them.

For all this I can plead ignorance in my excuse; my experience had yet to teach me that we seek vainly here on earth for any other satisfaction when we have rejected the only true one—that of religion; and so being in this darkness, I was as loath to be torn from my lusts and vanities as ever a true Christian could be from his faith and hope and the fulness of his heavenly assurances. If I were to be happy, it should only be on my own terms, and after my own fashion; as for my more zealous counsellors, why should I listen to them only to be persuaded into disquietude? I could have cried out to them, with the Argive—

Pol me occidistis amici,  
Non servastis ait, cui sic extorta voluptas,  
Et demtus per vim mentis gratissimus error.

In short, I carried the doctrine of supererogation beyond its utmost papistical limits. In my articles of faith, “a little more than a little was by much too much.” Scantiness I held better than excess, short-falls of easier remedy than overthrows.

To conclude all, I flattered my supineness with the notion that Christianity was strong enough to work its own way, and should be left to do so; that it could be nothing else than mischief to darken knowledge

with words, to interfere with higher counsels than our own ; that every man should keep his religion in his soul, lest its purity should be sullied by the use of worldly communications ; that he should make a secret of it, and keep his secret most religiously.

Hence it was that I hated the zeal that is instant in season and out of season ; that fans the faint embers, and suffers not him that slumbers, but calls him up to disquiet him. I was no divine, but yet there was one particular class of people that stirred up my bile to the quality of the true "theological hatred,"—I mean the peripatetic pietists, the "*piétons*" of a double sense, the frequenters of widows' houses, makers of prayers, whisperers of spiritual comfort into the ear of privacy. I watched all their moves, I regarded their comings and their goings as jealously as does the substantial country dealer the movements of his hawking rival. Why could not people serve themselves at the regular shop ? Are not the church doors wide enough for all comers ? Overcheap sold, is not overhonestly come by. Depend upon it they are smuggled goods ; look if they have the custom-house stamp upon them. It is a scandal, a crying shame, such interlopers are the ruin of the fair dealer. This was about the general tone of my feeling, I will not call it my opinion, on this "great argument." It was no especial fault of my disposition ; in the nature of things it could hardly have been otherwise. I was not so happy as to be born or brought up in a family of any extraordinary piety. In course of time I had got a few general notions about religion, just as I had about

other abstract virtues ; but it was never in privacy with me, I took it not to heart, I was a mere customary Christian. Here, too, at school, I was thrown in, for many years together, among five hundred boys who thought quite as little about it as myself. Indeed, during the whole time that I was there, I never knew a school-fellow, and I would almost dare to say that I never had one, addicted to Christ ; impressed with the sacred seal ; penetrated with a full, and lively, and deep, and prevailing sense of his duties towards his Creator. I am sorry to say it—I regret that offence must come—but true it is that we were thought sufficiently trained, if we were trained to scholarship ; or I should say, not to it, but in the way of it ; as to religion we were left to get it as we could—to glean it if we were so disposed, here and there in the open fields, as occasion presented itself, instead of preparing the soil duly and of set purpose, and sowing the seed, and so in the end reaping our harvest on our own account, and filling our bosoms with the abundance of it. It was presumed, I suppose, that in that way we were no worse off than our neighbours, or the most of them ; that we had as fair a chance for it as they ; that, however it might be, the world would contrive to work its way ; and that, in spite of all things, we might reasonably hope to leave it as good, or thereabouts, as we had found it. And so the conscience stands excused. Well, the excuse is an easy one. Heaven grant that it may be as efficacious as it is easy ! at all events, it will serve us very well as a colourable plea ; the only question is, how it is to avail us

against the enemy, when we are to stand for our last judgment.

I am pretty sure that in my time there was no such boy as I have mentioned in our whole city—no, not one. He would have shown as “the snowy dove among the crows;” not indeed trooping with them, but infested by them, and persecuted by them—vexed with all adversity. Our chapel-goings were frequent; there we appeared, and were offered up bodily; but our hearts, and souls, and feelings were seldom of the congregation. Our governors, I suppose, thought that it was with religious sentiments as sportsmen tell us that it is with hares—if there be only a form it is enough; the living thing is sure to come shortly, and occupy and possess it. As for me, I am incredulous.

It is clear from all this that my share of the great prerogative of mankind, the privilege of religion, amounted to very little. Habit, example, and communication were all against me. I should say, before I go further, that in this respect a great change has taken place at Eton within a few years. Recently it has become regenerate. A new life, a very soul, has been breathed into the system. Religion has been vindicated to its rights. It is at length a Christian school, and a school of Christianity.

I felt most deplorably this absence of all true religious feeling. Its effect was simply this—I was adrift on the main sea, without either compass or rudder. The lights of heaven, that might have guided me, the

stars shining out of darkness, shone for me, it is true, but vainly, and confusedly, and unintelligibly. I had no fixed central power to keep me in my orbit, and to restrain me from my wanderings—no leading principle—no such chosen object and regulator of my life as the Greeks called, most significantly, *proæresis*. I was not aware of the remedy, but I had long felt the pressure of the disease. I had often tried to throw my mind, my moral and intellectual life, into a determinate channel, that so it might speed on in a wholesome, and pure, and joyous stream, instead of evaporating in fogs, or wasting to black mud. For this end I had put divers expedients in practice. One after another I had taken up politics, and mathematics, and French literature, and composition, and other such implements—I use the word, as it may seem, pedantically, but I believe justly. I gave them each its trial, and I found that they all answered their purpose for a time, but the profit of them was chiefly in the pursuit; when I had gained my object, then I turned my back upon it, and altogether abandoned it. I should except the matter of politics—that single vein ran, it is true, through my whole mass, and drained it, although but partially, of some ill humours; but I felt all over me and through my entire being that something more was wanted; and this same want, had I continued to feel it, I should have been to this day one of the malcontents—a member of the self-dissatisfied mob—repiners against Providence—declaimers against the weariness of life—the dust, and drought, and disgust-



fulness of their earthly pilgrimage. But I supplied the want. And so I became a man worthy, and willing, and able to stand before his Maker.

This advantage of religion, its great worldly advantage, has not, I think, been commended to the height of its deserts. We are accustomed to regard it as a refuge in distress, a haven in bad weather, a relief, and but an occasional one, from the dead level of our ordinary life, a cordial against the fainting fit. But it deserves to be more than this, very greatly more. We should make it not so much the practice as the habit of our lives. We should not say, I will go and do this or that religious act; but we should so frame ourselves as to be led along in spirit through a perpetual series of such acts insensibly, and without consciousness of the effort, instead of being impelled to them *à prises et reprises*, by the freaks of caprice, the suggestions of mere officiousness. We should do as people devoted to its service, and not as hirelings for the job. We should make it the prevalent, pervading virtue of our souls; and, when once it is that, it then becomes a mighty engine of the mind—an intellectual as well as moral regenerator.

It is indeed essential to the strength, the real refined strength, as well as to the purity and elevation of the mind. I never yet knew an irreligious man of high and powerful intellect. Infidels, indeed, I have known, and known them as such—infidels, I mean, in our sense—but then they were always religious in their way; devout Deists; worshippers after the religion of nature; penetrated to their inmost beings by

the sentiment of Divinity, the consciousness of God's omnipotence, of his omnipresence, and of his infinite universal benevolence, and referring habitually to themselves all these his attributes. Such believers, as regards the advancement of their intellect, may be conceived to draw from their belief much of the same benefit as derives itself from the true Christian faith; but certainly not all of it. No human invention or imagination can supply the especial grace of Christianity, the warmth of its hopes, the fulness of its assurances, the preciousness arising from its price, its earnestness, comfort, and entire confidence. Still religious sincerity may do much, whatever be its scope; but for the scoffer there is no hope. He has degraded himself from his humanity; he became a mere intelligent ape when he flung away and trampled under foot his religious faith, the birthright of his reason, the bond of his communion with his Maker. Subtle he may still be, and swift, and insinuating, and of most venomous potency. But he must crawl, nevertheless, and eat dust all the days of his life; he has no spirit of aspiration; he has lost the expansive principle; he can never rise upward.

It is possible that some few foreigners may make an exception to this rule—men of intellectual eminence, and yet infidels. If it be so, it is only because the pest of infidelity is so prevalent abroad, that it becomes reconciled to itself. It lords it in the ascendant. It runs through the general tone of society; it is well reputed and received, and therefore loses something of its slavish, serpentlike quality—its enviousness, and

hatred, and sneering devilry. People may grow up in a pestilent atmosphere till they become inured to it, and show its effects not by any outward signs of plague, but only by the default of vigorous health, the depravity of the natural juices, and early decrepitude. Such, metaphysically translated, is the existence, the mental existence, of the infidel, even in his most favoured condition, in countries where he is at home.

It was from the translation of a German work—Sturm's *Reflections*—that my soul was first softened for the impress of religion. I cannot say that the feeling was altogether new to me; I had, of course, often heard and read the discourses of our Saviour in the Gospels, and never without being moved deeply. They breathe every one of them the very spirit of divinity. They work powerfully alike upon the child and upon the philosopher. The scribes may do their utmost to perplex the truth under pretence of explaining it, to smother Christianity under a heap of what they dare to call divinity, but here, at least, here in the blessed fountain itself, is an antidote against scepticism, a refreshment for the withered heart, a new life for the faithful. Never were our Saviour's words without such affection for me; but it lasted not long—no longer than the tears that it would occasionally call forth in me. These sudden sparks of feeling require something close at hand, some proper materials to catch and kindle, else are they born but to perish, as were mine hitherto. But it chanced one day that I went into a friend's room to amuse a vacant half hour on

the eve of chapel. There was a volume of Sturm upon the table; I opened it, began a subject, was interested in it, and went along with the author in full train. My time was running fast out, but my interest continued at its height, and our chapel-prayers were almost over before I was aware that they should have begun. Of course I was a defaulter, but my absence, by some strange accident, was unnoticed. This I took to be auspicious—a sort of Providential sanction of the book—and I loved it the more accordingly. However, apart from any such superstition, it is a work that can well afford to be estimated on its own merits. There is much in it, unless my boyish judgment deluded me, of rich colouring—of elegant design—of wondrous exhibition after nature—and, above all, of earnest and communicative piety. Besides, it has not the common fault of devotional works—that of dwelling too much upon abstractions; nor, again, that of shocking our prejudices too bluntly, and so irritating vanity instead of mortifying it. For instance, most writers of this kind are at no pains to suppress their contempt of human learning generally, and principally of classical learning. This, I felt, amounted to a stultification of all my pains and labours; I had, indeed, done the same thing myself, but not, I presume, in sincerity; or, at least, I used my studies as an ill-conditioned husband uses his wife—could bear to abuse them myself, but not to hear them abused by others. The vituperation stuck in my ears, and effectually precluded my acceptance of anything else that might be offered by the same parties. But there was nothing

of this in Sturm. He invites us to his communings as a saviour, instead of brandishing over our heads the sword of the conqueror and avenger, in the way of the eastern superstition. Altogether, I was captivated with his book, and lived much in it. I read it, too, in the summer season, when nature seems to conspire with religion, and to disclose, with her gentle touch, the sources of all the affections that tend heavenward. As often as I went forth and looked out, in that noon-tide of the year, upon the loveliness, and the abundance, and the gorgeousness of nature, instead of dissolving, as it were, my soul in the warmth of that delicious atmosphere, and revelling in the day-dreams of a mere sensual poetry—instead of resigning, as hitherto, my whole faculty to lie in lengthened indolence upon the lap of summer luxury, I began now to rise to the contemplation of God from that of his works; to see in every thing around me, in all those glorious phenomena, the express hand-writing, the very character of the Almighty, his authentic signature to his creation. Thus was I raised and expanded and glorified in spirit. It is true that this is not the real religion—scarcely even a type of it, or at best a very obscure and shadowy one—but my heart was won over from its hardness, and made contrite, and penetrated with heavenly influences. It is only on that soil—on the heart renewed and quickened—that the good seed can be sown with good hope and promise; and thus, though I was as far as ever from the doctrine, I was brought near, at least, to the sentiment of religion.

## CHAPTER X.

Oh reader, had you in your mind  
 The stores that silent thought can bring,  
 Oh gentle reader, you would find  
 A soul in every thing.—WORDSWORTH.

THESE, then, were what the poet would call “blest conditions”—blest according to the measure of their extent, though short of full blessedness. Indeed, I have sometimes thought that it would be well if we considered every child as God has considered the human race; if we taught him and suffered him to grow up awhile amid the thoughts and influences of natural religion, and so prepared his heart, and mellowed, as the dyers say, his whole being for the glorious final tincture—the baptism to regeneration—the mysteries of the revealed faith. As it is, as education now plods on in its customary task-work, the boy is too apt to become a scoffer, or, at best, a careless and a mere nominal Christian, because he is required to receive the spirit before his affections have been hallowed for its reception; he is introduced into the holy of holies ere his soul has been long enough conversant in the outer court—the place of preparation—the religion of the Gentiles. I have often heard and observed the language of boys on these most holy subjects, and the

method of their minds upon them. They have a short but quick sight ; they catch at a verbal contradiction, and disregard the truth involved in it ; they busy themselves about the husk, handling, twisting, and torturing it, but they refuse the kernel. In short, I never yet knew a boy who was the better Christian for so very early an initiation into mysteries ; and I have known many who have become carpers and cavillers, and probably, therefore, sceptics in after life, only from their early indoctrination, and from the habit implied in it, and in the boy necessarily implied, of looking only to points, instead of regarding the system as a grand whole, of regarding it, that is, in a view utterly beyond their scope of vision.

At that time, unfortunately, I was no great venerator of the Sabbath ; or, at all events, my veneration was of the very darkest and most dismal hue, untempered with a single gleam of love or joyousness. There was no recreation for me in its rest ; only an unquiet yawningness, a sickness of heart and stomach, a faintness of all my faculties, as though my veins were running with ditch-water ; an itching propensity to be at something, without the power to gratify it. I was not singular in my antipathy. The whole herd of us, great and small, learned and unlearned, were parties to it. We were utter antisabbatists ; gladly would we have repudiated the property of the long day so heavily bestowed upon us. Of all the painful afflictions of boyhood, I know hardly any worse than that of wading through the slough of Sunday. To me it was a dead oppression—a sort of journalized night-

mare ; I felt in mind as I should have done in body had I been kept to a standing posture without support, or, as old Brown expresses it, to a continuance of enforced station, through the livelong day. Surely it is a serious mistake to pretend to make the Sabbath sacred by making the man idle—to relieve the labours of the week by the most racking of all exhaustions, the exhaustion of listlessness. To set apart one day as consecrate to the Lord, and give that very day over to the devil, to sow in it his tares among the fruit of the week's industry ; to propose to a set of boys, and to men equally destitute of all good resources, the alternative of indolence or mischievousness,—can it be that God is thus glorified, or religion honoured, or our Saviour commended to our love ? But religion must have its rights ; aye, I say, amen ! its own rights, and our affections into the bargain, in full and overflowing measure. Let it have the duty of our devotion, but, when that is satisfied, let it also have the gratitude of our gladness. Multiply, if you will, your preachers, magnify your churches, do everything, as rulers are bound to do, for the growth of grace, and the union of all hearts in true religion ; but then, when this is done, let the heart express itself ; let nature have its course. Let the morn be ushered in and celebrated with all solemnity, but let gaiety and open gamesomeness, rather than secret debauchery, have their share in the after-day. So much for children, and the same rule is a reasonable one for the poor man—the daily labourer ; as for his rich neighbour, he needs no recreation, but rather the con-



trast of earnest exercise as a relief to his week's idleness. Let that earnest exercise be the exercise of his soul; let it be bestowed upon his Maker; let it go up continually to God in the strivings of aspirant faith, the fervours of devotion. For him, indeed, it may be that the whole Sabbath's space is no more than just sufficient for the acknowledgment of God's grace, and the redemption of his evil days: and, besides, as he has leisure, so also he should have learning. His books, his meditations, should have supplied the sources of his devotion, and enabled it to cheer what would otherwise have been a barren waste by its continual course, by the freshening liveliness of its stream; whereas the ideas of the uneducated man are few, his attention feeble, the compass of his mind narrow, his judgment unpractised and uncertain; consequently his root is but seldom deep, his faculty of devotion is speedily exhausted. And so of the raw school-boy. Task him not beyond his strength; when he has satisfied God's service, suffer him, in such sports as he likes best, to fulfil the season of his amusement, lest you cloud his Sabbath to dismalness, and make prayer itself hateful to him.

At last, after long years of sufferance, I was delivered from my bondage. A young friend who left the school soon afterwards gave me a little book, made up of extracts from Paley. If I had asked him to give me half his fortune instead, I think it not improbable that he would have refused me. But yet, as it was, he had given me, I believe in my conscience, what was much more valuable to me. One day, just

as I had returned from church, and was sitting alone under my usual Sunday cloud, it occurred to me, for I was never without a certain sense of religious propriety, that this would be a good book to read. I opened it, and read a few pages with enough of interest to keep my attention alive. At last I struck upon a passage, that, like the trap-door in the Arabian Nights, opened a treasure to my enjoyment. It was the recommendation of Paley, given in more expressive language than now occurs to me, that we should get the habit of filling up our leisure time, our hours of idleness, by the contemplation of God in his works—in his works, and through them, and by them. The thought struck me instantly; I saw that it was good; it was one of those ideas which the soul recognises at once, by a kind of familiar sympathy, as being of its kindred. I got up from my chair in a sort of surprise, as one that has just received intelligence of hope or pleasure from a sudden messenger. I paused not long upon the prospect. I took my hat, and went out upon the impulse, determined not to lose a moment of the promised happiness from default of making trial. One would hardly think that the impression on a boy of seventeen should have been so deep and so immediate, but such it was. The *molliæ tempora* must have been prevalent with me—the mood of feeling and susceptibility. I went out, and found, to my surprise, that, by virtue of my new talisman, I saw with other eyes, and felt with other feelings than I had been used to do. The veil had fallen from before my sight. I stood in immediate presence before the Lord and all his works.

Everything had a meaning for me ; from every object that met my eyes there seemed to go forth a voice, to breathe a spirit of holiness. I followed my first step. I resigned myself to the imagination ; and still as I dwelt upon it, would it develope itself more and more vividly, till my soul was enlarged within me, swollen into the fulness of space, blended with immensity. I was penetrated with sympathy. Objects that I had never before noticed, soulless and insensible things, as I should then have deemed them, on a sudden to my apprehension were instinct with a new life, pregnant with a holy significance. I found sermons in the very stones, and good in everything. From the tiniest leaf upon the tree, the grass under my feet, the waving corn, and sheep, and cattle, to the bright beaming atmosphere, the sun, the firmament above my head, all things animate and inanimate seemed to claim communion with me, to be partakers of the same glorious Godhead, to be vital, like myself, with the individual spirit—the soul of the universe. The *Te Deum laudamus*, the song of conspiring praise, was sent up from the chorus of all creation. I appeared to know myself out of darkness and the thick cloud, to feel for the first time that I was at home in the universe.

I came home delighted with myself and my discovery, and all that it had disclosed to me. I had found a new element of life—one purer, and warmer, and more ethereal than all the others. But I was somewhat diffident of myself. Not over-prone to draw very largely upon the fund of my recent fortune, I was afraid, as in former cases, of handling what I fan-

ced might possibly prove a bubble ; my estimate of my treasure was so high, that I feared lest my very anxiety about it should bring about a failure in " the hour of act," and then my recollection would be spoiled ; it was safer, I imagined, not to wear my new habit in ordinary, but to lay it up in my memory, while all its gloss was yet upon it, and bring it out once in a while upon occasions.

However, I repeated the experiment from time to time ; not always with the same success, for that of course would depend mainly upon my disposition of the moment, and I was then as raw and uncertain as my years, but always, on the whole, with profit. A change came over my whole spirit ; not an instantaneous one, for I did not baptize myself at once so fully as I ought to have done in this water of regeneration, but a perceptible and thorough, though a gradual one. My Sundays especially presented themselves to me in a wholly different aspect. They were no longer clad in mourning—dark, dismal, and lugubrious ; on the contrary, I welcomed them as the bridegroom does his bridal morning. As soon as chapel was over I used to give myself up to my meditations, and return, after an hour or two's stroll, wiser, and better, and happier than I went forth.

But what most surprised me was this, I found not merely my religious feeling, but, moreover, my intellect, strengthened and heightened inexpressibly by these my contemplations. Of this I had no forethought. As for piety, it was a thing that I had never cultivated. It might come if it would, and fall

where it list, like the dew of heaven ; but, for myself, I was at no pains to make a study of it. In this, if I had believed myself to need any apology, I should have taken shelter under the cloak of authority and example. We were bad scholars the most of us, but yet much better scholars than devotees. The ambition of the schoolboy will hardly condescend to fly at such low game as the moral virtues. I knew what was in price among us. I had observed that certain of my schoolfellows were caressed, and distinguished, and pointed out to us for our patterns, not because they were highminded as regarding their worldly interests, and humbleminded as regarding themselves, and good, and kind, and faithful ; but because they were conversant with Porson's canons, and were clever at versification, and were supposed to have some taste of the genuine classic fountain. I saw this, and noted it thereupon, and carried my talents, such as they were, to the best reputed market. In the mean time I had not the smallest idea that I was building upon no foundation, or upon one of mere sand ; that genius, so long as it stands by itself, however keen and brilliant it may be, is but a mere edge, useless for good purposes, and apt only to cut the fingers of its master ; if we would make a serviceable tool of it, we must back it with a weight of substantial metal, of sterling morality ; it is only so that we can give it steadiness and power, that we can drive it well home. I was not conscious of all this. I knew indeed my infirmities, and had long felt them most bitterly, but I had never the least notion of their remedy. Here it was

at my disposal. I was not indeed in the rank of geniuses, and my ambition to reach that rank had been fruitful of nothing but repulses and mortifications. Still I was a great gainer by my discovery ; in mind as well as soul altogether another being.

The truth is, that the greater number by far of our failures and discomfitures in life, small and great, galling, nettling, or crushing, arise from our want of confidence ; not the superficial confidence of the cockcomb, who is clear only because he is shallow, and for the same reason is babbling perpetually ; but deep, deliberate confidence—the confidence that is above its work, and therefore master of it. I began to feel just now “a touch of this quality.” My devotional aspirations, my communion with the Creator, had raised me to no common pitch ; I was higher than the worldly level ; I could take a wider, and clearer, and truer survey of what was under me, than when I was jostling about among my fellows. As I rose, so also I lost sight of those little, low, irritating annoyances, the pin and needle points strewn about so thickly in the highway of life, and so distracting and harassing to its wayfarers. Already I was well nigh superior to them ; they concerned me but little. Here was an inestimable advantage for me in respect of mental improvement. In my younger days I had been captious and passionate, jealous, resentful, and capricious ; all this from the excess of my sensibility, and the want of any regular determinate issue for it. This was now provided ; my waters no longer ran to waste ; my evil humours were corrected and purified by being thrown

into a proper course. I became comparatively calm and considerate ; I regarded the things about me less, and the things above me much more ; consequently, as my passions declined, my judgment waxed daily. Indifference and skilfulness are as natural allies in the offices of life as they are in the forms of our law commissions. It is a true proverb, He who despises the world is master of it.

I do not mean to say that religious feeling is necessary, absolutely necessary, for the attainment of eminence. I know that there are very many examples to the contrary. In times of heat and boiling contention, the refuse, the veriest dregs, if they have only buoyancy enough, are often borne up, and swim like scum upon the surface. In short, one may be a great man, according to the vulgar estimate of greatness, without the slightest sense of religion ; but it would be scarcely possible in that case, I do not say to achieve great things, but to live a great life. I admit, however, that even this is just possible ; as it is possible for a man to be a drunkard, and yet live out a century ; or to get a single great prize in a lottery ; or to live a life of reckless prodigality and yet die rich : in fact, from the very nature of probability, its highest possible terms must always be liable to be overruled by the result ; but still, as in the case of the drunkard and the spendthrift, though the one may live long and the other die rich, we may conclude, nevertheless, that those predicaments of their life would have been greatly enhanced if they had been sober and thrifty men ; so it is true of irreligion, that, though it may

leave a man much of his steadiness, and determination, and general capacity, yet it certainly takes much away—or at least precludes the addition of much more. For my own part, if a father were to come and tell me that it was his wish to bring his son up to this or that business or profession, no matter what it might be—always excepting soldiership, for, where our nature is once degraded to brute violence, there is an end of all reason, or, at all events, of all reasoning upon it—but for any other profession, if I were consulted as to the best method of preparation for it, it is not industry that I should recommend, nor fortitude, nor energy, nor regularity—no; none of these—but religious feeling, which involves them all, and would be sure to evolve them in its progress.

Steadiness, in fact, is the main requisite for success; and this religious feeling is the only assurance that we can have of confirmed steadiness. The latter, it is true, may exist without it; but then it can exist only in dependence upon the humour of the individual. It is only while we put our reliance upon our God that we can walk surely, and steadfastly, and straightly; it is only by such aid that our spirit can rise above the mist, and clear itself from the passions and anxieties of our nature, with all the hindrances to worldly, as well as to intellectual success, directly derived from them.

So much for negative infidelity; in other words, for the absence of all vital faith. This, I have endeavoured to show, is a grievous default—a most dismal void, as all who have escaped from it will bear



testimony. But this is a mere privation; whereas the other evil, that of positive infidelity, is worse than the negative one, in the same way and the same degree as viciousness is worse than idleness, pain than indolence, anxiety than indifference. No man will doubt that, of all worldly habits, the habit of gambling is the most adverse to intellectual advancement, the most ruinous to intellectual health. The irritation, the fretfulness and fever, the perpetual boiling agitation occasioned by it, make it impossible for the mind to retain, or even to receive, any certain character and impression. But the spirit of gambling and that of scepticism are very nearly akin. The essence of both is the disposition to set our property upon hazards; hence the evil passions that I have just described as arising from the perpetual agitation of the mind, among so many fatal changes and chances, are common to each of them. But scepticism is a foolish gamester—a pigeon that has gone over to “troop with crows,” but still remains a pigeon. It does not understand its game—it has never calculated the chances. The gambler is the wiser of the two; he has, at least, a hope of winning. The more chances may be against him, but some, undoubtedly, are in his favour. The sceptic, on the contrary, stands to lose everything, and can win nothing, let the event come off as it may.

He plays with sterling coin against flash paper.

He puts out on hazard, and with very little chance of redemption, a happiness more valuable to him, if he only knew its worth, than all the world beside; and

what is the utmost that he can gain? The satisfaction of taking to his heart the sneers and sarcasms of infidelity, with all its accompanying tempers, in exchange for his hope, his comfort, and his assured happiness.

I grew up in this devotional practice, but with all its advantages I fell short. I was yet greatly below the standard of Christianity. My devotion existed in the abstract—it was mere natural religion—a feeling rather than a faith. But, whatever it might be, I thank Heaven that it was vouchsafed to me. It did me much good, and at a critical season. I was at the age when the world, with all its wide-spread vanities, was just opening upon me. I knew it, in some degree, by anticipation; I had the prospects of its paths, though as yet I could not be said ever to have walked in them. But I was aware of the tempers and qualities of those about me—of my competitors in my future race; and I was beginning, even then, by the mere force of imitation, to frame myself to their model; to renounce the spirit and embrace the vanities of the world; to abjure the divinity within me, and addict myself to the depravity of my nature. The feeling of devotion, irregular as it was, came just in time to counteract this base tendency, and throw me into another course; otherwise I had been lost. I must have grown into the dry, dusty, plodding callousness of those who pursue the pilgrimage of life along its ordinary high road.

I have before stated my conviction that all true greatness of mind depends upon the culture of the

affections—their nurture, their exercise, and their development. Primarily and naturally this development, or the first yearnings of it, are shown in the bosom of our families. But this is an imperfect and generally an ineffective discipline. It is not always in the contact of friendliness and with their smooth sides, but rather with their points and angles, that the members of a family come together. Parents may be unkind, children ungrateful, wives and husbands perverse; brotherhood is but too frequently hatred in disguise; selfishness and suspicion are rife everywhere; and where we look for comfort, there often is desolation. In that case whither shall we have recourse?—where can we take refuge? Where else but in devotion; in that faithful home of our affections—that one precious treasure—that unfailing source? There at length we are at rest. There, and there only, the mind can take its stand, surely and steadfastly; with that purchase it may operate at its will upon all objects around it. Independently of it, it is true, the mind may be a thing of exquisite texture, of fine material, of rich colouring and fancy, of most cunning composition, but it can be no more; as it was first formed, so must it remain; it can never rise; it must lie grovelling on the ground, unable to support itself by any inward virtue. The spirit of devotion only, the soul that is breathed into it, can swell it into buoyancy, expand it to the full beauty of its proportions, and speed it on its upward flight, its heavenly aspirations. Thus, and thus only, can it fulfil its destinies.

But, though I feel to this day the angelic influence of the devotion then entertained by me, I cannot commend it absolutely. It was of too epicurean a quality. It served admirably well to warm and soften and spiritualize my mind, to prepare it for the seed of Christianity; but further than this it lacked efficacy. It was unproductive itself, though the cause of productiveness in other things. I might have been imbued with it to the heart's core, and yet a very heathen. It had no power to develop the sterner and more trying and peculiarly Christian virtues. It had a tendency to make me compassionate, and kind, and gentle, and disinterested, and generous, rather than niggardly; these are fine qualities, but they are compatible with others of less worth, and indeed rather akin to them. For instance, with all this I might have been luxurious in my daily diet—a prodigal—a libertine—an irregular, dreaming idler. There was nothing in the devotion that I practised at all counteractive of these mischiefs; nay more, it might have served to encourage them. The seal of Christianity was wanting to set a stamp upon my character; to give me a real practical value—a sterling currency. Had I continued as I then was—a lover of God and all his works, a studier and adorer of nature, a warm, enthusiastic, self-sufficing votary—I should probably have been an amiable man, but more probably still, a mere cypher in the world; a man of no imaginable use among my fellows. I walked in these ways for a season happily and profitably, but, if I had never gone beyond them, I must have been lost

in them infallibly. I had the proof of this in the sequel.

In fact, even as it was, I believe that I indulged myself something too much in this habit. In consequence of it I fell into a kind of acquiescence, or rather, that I may not palliate a bad quality with a good name, into sheer indolence. I confirmed myself in my love of solitude, and I began already to feel the insidious approaches of its usual offspring—aversion to everything like business and active proficiency. I needed not the uses and appliances of society. I was content to contemplate the glories of the creation ; I delighted in the bounty, the prodigality, of nature, and it never occurred to me that, if I had blessings to receive, I had also duties to discharge, and that it was only by the fulfilment of these last that I could entitle myself to the former. I let the vein flow, and troubled myself but little with any such compunctious visitings. Had I been ten years older, and suffered such a habit to grow upon me, it must have been my ruin. It is easy enough for any man to go along with the stream of life singly and at his pleasure, but where we have to cross it, or to encounter it, it is only in company and by co-operation that we can advance against the force of so many adverse and transverse currents. I have read in some French author, who spoke his own experience, *à Paris on ne vient à bout de rien quand on y vit isolé* ; and it is true not in Paris only, but all the world over.

This spirit of acquiescence diffused itself throughout me, and at a time, too, when activity should have

been the soul of my existence. For one among many other results, I became a spendthrift of my time; I blotted the morning from my day; I was bedridden in the worst sense—the sense of laziness. To no deadlier enemy of my advancement could I possibly have surrendered myself. It avails nothing to multiply testimonies of the truth—experience is unanimous—the difficulty is not in faith but practice: it would be hard to find a single man who ever made himself great, and was not an early riser. As for myself, after long years of reluctancy, I have not even yet disenthralled myself from this silken captivity. I know no greater height of heroism, no more transcendent virtue, than to spring up from my bed at the moment of my first waking. This is easy enough for people habituated to it; but how to acquire the habit, there is the masterwork. I have tried all ways and means, I have made a hundred experiments, but no one of them can I commend with any certainty of commendation. My practice goes generally by courses; a single victory is the presage, and indeed the cause, of many more. One unlucky succumbence to idleness turns the tide at once, and forces my determinate current back again upon its fountain. Habit, then, is everything—the first step is the prompter of the second—all is easy to perseverance. And now, as to the best method of perseverance, I will adventure a few hints.

In the first place, in this, as in all other virtuous resolves, to act upon the first impulse is the only policy. It is said of women, and of garrison commanders,

that if they pause upon the proposition, if they suffer themselves to be brought to parley, they are surely lost. This is as true here. Listen not to the siren ; to commune with her is to struggle with one's mistress. Such a contest can end only in supineness, relaxation, and exhaustion. We should realize by act the words "awake, arise," in as quick, as immediate a succession, as they were uttered by the poet. The man who springs from his bed, as the French say, "*en sursaut*," is the only conqueror ; he shakes off the heaviness of his chain, the cloudy dulness of his slumber, the confusedness of his dreams, and so "Richard's himself again." The first touch of light is like that of Ithuriel's spear—it strikes him, and he starts up at once in his proper likeness. And oh the happiness of the vindication ! It is then only that we quaff the first flowings into our cup ; the briskness, the spirit, the sparkling liveliness of the young day ; let it stand but for an hour or two, and it is already settled upon its lees—it is become stale, flat, and vapid.

The early-rising man has the same conscious comfort through the day as the prudent, thrifty householder has through life ; he is beforehand with the world, he has laid up something in advance, and that of no ordinary worth, but an inestimable thing, the most precious of all treasures—Time. He takes the day by the forelock ; he drives it, instead of being driven, or rather dragged along by it. Besides, the dispositions of our earlier moments, our briskness or disgust, our dulness or our alacrity, impart themselves almost infallibly to the subsequent ones, and are

wrought into the texture of the day. Like generates like, one minute is begotten of another, the beginning is auspicious of the end. I will say no more—truth is short, and words are endless; only I must regret that this great virtue, and instrument of happiness, has been neglected like all others, simply, (simply indeed, and very foolishly,) because we know or fancy that it is in our power at any moment.

For my whole life through, this difficulty of early rising has been a quicksand in my course, sometimes dissipated, again accumulated in all its danger, disappearing and reappearing from time to time. Often have I been aground upon it, more than once I have been in danger of utter shipwreck. I have set my buoy upon it at last, let others make their profit of my experience.

I was now in my eighteenth year. I had been working my way since childhood, as I best might, through all sorts of changes, through hope and joy, disappointment and vexation, frequent failure and occasional success, with many a wide yawning gap and gaping yawn of indifference and inertness; while time, almost the only sure thing upon earth, a subtle thief, but as steady as the honestest man among us, was advancing swiftly, though silently. As for my person, my bodily frame, he had wrought greater changes upon it within the last five years than he is likely to do again in any twenty; on my mind he had been no such cunning artificer of improvement. He had left his mark there, but not in a very rational or significant character.



However, what is past is past all remedy. I had now to look forwards; the world was all before me, and a sad prospect I had of it. My friends, my schoolfellows, were fast vanishing around me; hardly a week passed but some one of them was lost to his associates, and dedicated to new cares and destinies. I knew that my turn must come soon, but I had no delight in the knowledge, it was a bitter fruit to me, and the bitterer, the more I chewed it. Aforetime indeed, years and years back, I used to fancy that this death to boyhood, and birth to a new life, was the happiest of all earthly consummations—an emersion from darkness into light—a delivery out of bondage—an angelic translation. But not so now; my mind misgave me, my hopes failed me, my fears overclouded me, my spirit sank within me. I stood on the brink, shuddering in my nakedness, and, like Milton's fiend, pondering my passage. The difference was that of the ocean, seen by the purposed voyager, first from a safe distance, and again from its foaming, crashing, reverberating shore. It is in boyhood, as in old age—the greater our feebleness, the more destitute our condition, the more fondly do we cling to it, and the more reluctantly do we advance a step beyond it. For myself, I was conscious, painfully conscious, of my infirmities and insufficiencies; of necessity, I had dwelt so much the more upon them, I had become more impressed with them, from my very endeavours to improve them. A careless, reckless young fellow would have thought nothing of all this, and so it would have signified nothing to him; but I was of another

spirit; I had not yet entirely corrected my natural sensitiveness; I brooded over my imaginations, till I had reared from them all sorts of hideous and terrific phantoms.

But this cloudiness of my soul was interrupted by a gleam of sunshine; I was something of a French scholar, as the reader has learnt at length, and at the cost probably of many protracted yawns and much tediousness of endurance. Schoolboylike, I piqued myself on the knowledge; little as it was, I made much of it; I put a false figure before my cyphers, and so gave them an imaginary, a counterfeit value; just as one sees in the case of aspirants after great acquaintances—the less such a man knows of this or that nobleman, the more anxious he is to take credit for knowing him perfectly; to make a casual introduction, a chance word, the stepping-stone to a pretended familiarity; to confirm a bowing correspondence into a strait and stedfast friendship.

But I was ambitious not only to have the reputation, but also to deserve it; I made a point of my object; nothing would serve me but I must go off to Paris, there to perfect myself in parlance! This, it must be acknowledged, was a bold stroke for a schoolboy—a towering ambition—a most audacious extravagance. What! a young fellow of seventeen to hazard himself within the express limits, the very magic circle, of the sorceress; to confront the whole host of temptations, and bid them all defiance; to breathe the own proper atmosphere of gamblers, sharps, and swindlers, and yet hope to wend his way home again scatheless of the

infection; to throw down his gauntlet, where it was certain on the instant to be taken up, and that by many a dauntless Amazon, who never yet failed to lower the crest of every antagonist, to exhaust his prowess, and abate even unto droopingness every spear that might be set in rest against her; this was indeed a daring feat, a most presumptuous confidence. But my wilfulness would have its way. By dint of protestation and perseverance, I got the consent of my parents—a consent, I must needs own, implying the assurance rather of their affection than of their judgment; and so I set out one fine summer's day with my discretion for my Mentor. This was but a blind guide, a sort of will-o'-the-wisp authority. The wonder is that it did not lead me into the very slough of debauchery, and there leave me lost and sunk irretrievably; but good fortune for once supplied the offices of good guidance; my way was beset with dangers; divers of them I encountered, and came off but haltingly from the contest—but once in the “mistress city”—oh, how significantly is she named!—and I rested there in safety.

Via prima salutis,

Quod minimè reris, Graiâ pandetur ab urbe.

The course of my expedition was typified by that of my voyage. We were crossed and baffled out of patience in our navigation down the river, but when we got into the open sea, where I apprehended the danger, it was all plain sailing.

Happily I was well commended there; I got into the family—not merely into the house, but absolutely

for a time into the family—of a fine old French gentleman, an ancient soldier, a “*brave homme*,” in the social sense of the word, and I doubt not in the military one also. Unluckily, his worth was his only wealth, and therefore, poor man, he was content, aye and right glad too, to take me as a lodger. However, though somewhat reduced, he was yet nowise decayed. His household was in as good order, and as well provided, as any garrison that he ever served in; and, with all its other comforts, there was one more and better than all—a pretty girl of twenty, niece of my hostess, thereto appurtenant. Hitherto I had seen but very little of female society—little of its good, and nothing at all of its evil lineaments. My heart was a virgin soil; it showed a good promise of return, whatever seed might be flung into it. I was only seventeen, and in voice, manners, and appearance, I was even younger than my years. Man is a plant that ripens earlier in France than under our foggy influences; in the Parisian hot-bed, above all, he is a thing most precocious. No wonder, then, that in the eyes of a lively Frenchwoman, older than myself in years, and in maturity advanced immeasurably beyond me, I appeared as a mere stripling, a piece of raw material; and so indeed I was, but it was the rawness of fashionment rather than that of substance—inexperience rather than ignorance. To be short, I was much wiser than she was aware of.

My host and hostess were kind, good, amiable, and joyous people; by no means of high rank, nor yet of very high notions; content with such comforts as they

had about them, and living but little in the world, though one might have fancied, from their gaiety and talkativeness, that they could never be at home but in society. My presence, I have no doubt, was a pleasure to them, a relief in their vacancy, and an occasion for the exercise of their kindness, which in itself, to persons so disposed, is one of the very highest pleasures. On the whole, then, I was a favourite with them; from the moment that I came, as they had little else to do, it seemed to be their only concern to provide for my amusement. But curiosity is a craving thing, boyhood is importunate, and years are a weary load. They were subject to their infirmities; their good will and kindliness of spirit hardly sufficed to carry them through days of sight-seeing; still they seemed to think it was a thing that must be done, or that otherwise they should fail me in a point of duty. They essayed it once or twice, and then concluded, philosophically enough, that the exertions of their young lady to amuse me would be quite as agreeable to me as their own; accordingly to her I was consigned—she had the entire charge of me. In everything—walking, reading, seeing spectacles, and even play-going—I was put under her direction. They regarded me as a mere boy; they considered our companionship a matter of course, as much as if she had been my mother; and, indeed, girls of twenty in France and England are very different beings. There they are framed earlier—they are sooner out of their girlhood—they are women in mind almost as soon as they are in person; consequently, they have

vastly more discretion, and are less liable to be thrown off their guard by any sudden impulse. As for us two, we were constantly together, and it has been said, on great authority, that two people so circumstanced cannot fail to fall in love with each other. This was not altogether our case; but, nevertheless, my young patroness, I am quite sure, conceived a liking for me, and that not so much from any qualities of my own, as by the force of nature and necessity. Such as I was at that time, a fashionable woman would have abhorred me—she could never have endured me, to say the very least of it. I was strange, and, as the French express it, *sauvage*—pity we have no synonyme for the word, nothing in our dictionary comes near it. I was made up of points; full of contrarieties; but then in those contrarieties, in those very points, for a person who has leisure to examine them, to study and dwell upon them, there is something of piquancy. They excite a feeling of surprise, and surprise is akin to interest, and interest is the own sister of affection. My kind and condescending damsel took upon herself, in the first instance, to soothe the shyness of my spirit—to reconcile me to the strangeness of the things about me—to induce me, by the sunshine of her gentleness, to throw off the cloak of my reserve and walk openly. She spoke softly to me, and entreated me kindly, and would fain even have caressed me into complaisance. But this was a step too far; it brought her to the very verge of imprudence, not to say impropriety—I dislike the last word; where there is nature and good feeling I

would fain hope that it can have no business. But she discovered that those sisterly caresses might chance upon a time to be met in no very brotherly spirit. Accordingly she took the alarm—she started from her purpose—

*Improvisum aspris veluti qui sentibus, &c.*

For indeed in my nature, as in all persons of my age, there was a serpentlike, insinuating quality, which, when taken into the bosom of a female, cold and numb as it might before have seemed, is sure to raise its crest, and warm itself into designs of danger.

I repeat it, I am not vain enough to suppose that my fair damsel felt any vehemence of affection for me. I was very unlikely to transmit myself into the heart of any living lady. It is not to such uncouth stripplings as I then was that the cunning little god is ever known to delegate his authority. But she played the game of love with me just as she might play any other game, merely to amuse herself; and so much the more readily as she was probably heart-whole, and would therefore flatter herself that the issue was in her own hands, that she could check any advances on my part, and force me upon my retreat at any moment. The fact was, that she had long been living there in retirement, and, as the poorest herb is welcome in the desert, she was not sorry to be able to play off her fire-works even on such a subject as myself. To women there is an inexpressible fascination in this dalliance with danger—this compromise between love and coquetry. It is their one excitement, and it is worth to them all the

thousand others that serve to relieve, or more often to distract, the dulness of their lords and masters. They are content to be whirled out of their own thoughts in that pleasing vortex. Its eddying rapidity is so delightful—its attraction so gently powerful—its surface, up to the very edge, so smooth and glassy ; all is charming till the last fatal plunge itself, when the abyss is opened to its victim and then closes upon her for ever.

But here there was no such danger. Our intercourse was that of friendship, stimulated to a certain degree by that instinct of opposite sex, which, albeit unconsciously, must always give a charm to the friendship of open and unartificial minds. There was a good deal of amusement in my character, and my companion availed herself of it all simply to divert her leisure : moreover, she made it serve her as a kind of factitious experience, a practice of the points of fence, by way of lounging at a puppet. It was a strange medley of elements that went to my composition : the extreme sensitiveness of my nature contrasted oddly with the features of shrewdness and worldly wisdom acquired by me during my discipline at a great school. Hence my sudden changes from shyness to audacity, from reserve to recklessness, from smoothness and courteousness of demeanour to downright rudeness. This must always be the case in early youth, while the mind is made up of a heap of raw materials, such as must be tempered and run together by fusion before they can be wrought into sound metal and instruments of service. Till then



they are apt to start upon the surface and give each other the change most capriciously. But there is an infinite and a very amusing variety of phenomena in this said fusing process. My young governess was puzzled to reconcile my utter ignorance on some points with the extent of my information on many others; she could not comprehend me. She delighted in sharpening the edge of her wit upon my rude nature. Instead of comforting and caressing me, as heretofore, she took it into her head to tease me continually by all kinds of raillery and sarcasm; she stung me with nettles; she scourged me into excitement, and that sort of excitement is as effectual a provocative of love as complacency itself.

However, I cannot say that I was absolutely in love; my lady was too superior to me; such superiority, when it takes endearment for its ally, when it curtsies graciously to its object, has all the powers of a spell—it is irresistible; but without that alliance it has something of a repelling quality: our admiration tramples on the neck of our love. Love and lordliness, say the Italians, will none of each other's company; and whether the lordliness be of state or of mind it matters not, the effect is almost identical. Besides, I was too lumbering to enter into the vein of my mistress's raillery. The stings and nettles that I spoke of, had I been a few years older, they would only have added to my excitement, they would have stimulated my passion; as it was, my sensitiveness shrunk from them; it was only at times, in my gayer moods, that I could feel their incentive virtue.

In the mean time, possibly with a view to justify an act or two of familiar fondness, wherewith she had been observed by her elders to indulge me in the infancy of my visit, she invariably spoke of me and treated me as a mere boy—that is, in society, where she knew that her brilliancy was sure to dazzle me; otherwise, when alone, she was of a more submissive spirit towards me. Occasionally, as we went out together, the old gentleman would call to her—“Mind you take good care of him,—be sure that you don’t suffer him to fall in the way of the ladies from the Palais Royal.” Many such phrases, it should be observed, of questionable import in the ear of English delicacy, pass as so much current coin in the conversation of our neighbours. “Oh,” she would answer, off-hand, and with an easy, slighting air, “pray then, my good uncle be silent—(the form of speech, by-the-by, is French, and not English)—how can you put such notions into the head of a mere child like this?” These expressions put me on my mettle; my pride was piqued by them; I resolved, though without any wickedness of design, to try if I could not lower her from her high ground, to surprise her into the consciousness of my strength and her own weakness. But with such recitals the reader has no concern, neither has my subject, and so let them stand by.

Suffice it to say that, whether or not I had the passion of love, I had at least the sentiment, and the one is of more value than the other a thousand times over for all purposes of improvement; and this sentiment sped through every vein, it animated me afresh, it made a

new creature of me. I felt that a fresh source was open in me; I no longer recognised myself. For the first time, or nearly so, I was conscious of my virility. In such a warm, kindly climate, a consciousness like this, when once the instinct began to act, would expand itself with amazing rapidity. My spirit grew with my self-importance. I was eager, on all occasions, to vindicate myself into manhood—

For nature, crescent, does not grow alone  
In thews and bulk—but, as this temple waxes,  
The inward service of the mind and soul  
Grows wide withal.

I began to take my character; my voice, manner, and gait were improved from boyish vacillation into firmness and independence. I was as much altered by my new discipline as the ploughboy by that of his drill sergeant. My good old friends were struck by the difference, and expressed their surprise at it. They insisted that I was native there—a Parisian born; they would have it that I must have been spirited away in my infancy, and that I was now, by a happy accident, brought back to breathe in my proper atmosphere, and renewed by it to my genuine French spirit

But, to waive all this idleness, I am convinced that the sentiment of love is as propitious to the intellect as the mere sensual passion is degrading to it. In this sentiment there is a slight kind of excitement, a gentle stirring influence, a heavenly breath, such as used to be accepted in the old times as a happy augury, when it came down to inspire and enliven the flame upon the altar. One feels that one's

Spirits are nimble;  
They fall together all as by consent.

One's confidence too is strengthened; in fact the very word confidence means, properly, the mutual trust of persons bound together in affection; that was its first meaning, and it is still its truest and most forcibly significant one. Again, it is only thus that in our early boyhood we have any chance of being emancipated from our selfishness; of delivery from that basest of all slaveries, the slavery to our sordid selves and to our short-seen worldly interests: such delivery is a birth into elevation of sentiment, itself the very life and soul of intellect; provided always, and this is a most peremptory postulate, that the love here spoken of be the heavenly love, as the Greeks called it in their mythology, and not the vulgar one; the spiritual, and not the carnal one; the love of affection, and not of mere appetite; such a love as Menander tells us is a better tutor than the best sophist that ever lived.

I left Paris, and the incidents that had befallen me there began gradually to lose their power; they were sunk, as all such impressions must be, from the surface of my mind, but still, like a richly coloured tincture thrown into a vessel of water, they had fallen from its surface to its depth, they had penetrated its whole volume; it is true their influence, the tone of colouring that they gave, was less discernible, but it was not therefore the less real.

There are some lines in *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* bearing for their burden the cankerworm of love, its choice of inhabitation in the finest wits of all, where, forsooth, it is wont to pull all to pieces, and

make mad work in its own brave chamber ; its frowardness, its blasting quality, its desperate destructiveness, and many other distempered imaginations to the same purpose. Now this is rank treason against poetical sovereignty—blasphemy against justice. And what then ? Why, the noxious member must be cut off—the play, aye, the entire play, in all the integrity of its wickedness, delivered up to the executioner, stamped with the brand of forgery. I divorce it from my faith. Off with its head ! away with it ! And yet there are sweet flowers peeping out with most poetical eyes from that same chaplet, breathing so balmily, as it might almost persuade the headsman to break his sword ; exquisite souls, lovely images, glittering with the genuine dew, bathed in the streamy radiance of fancy, clothed in the very golden light—the fairy cloth of gold ! And, this being so, it pains me to pass sentence ; for how much of excellent imagination must I degrade from its heraldry ! how true a nobility must I deprive of its escutcheon, disauthorize it of its goodly fatherhood, and vilify it with a name of indifference ! But heart-rendings must needs be ; justice must have her due ; and in this, seeing that Shakspeare has denied himself, I do but echo the denial from his lips : and this in no light thing, but in a primary article of his creed—his love confessions, his most bounden homage and allegiance : for who that hath not a hundred tongues, hath utterance enough to fulfil the many passages—passages, no, abiding sweetnesses, at least to my taste—where Shakspeare hath magnified the majesty, and extolled the spiritual efficacy of love,

as highly as he—nay, rather his false traitor of a mimic—has here most vilely debased it? But, to speak truth, affections are strong with me on both sides—antagonists at each ear; and who hath constituted me judge that I should decide this difference? The cognizance is of Love's court, it is he that hath received the wrong; let him avenge himself, as he is well able. He must be content to do the execution; as for me, my hand abhors it, my heart revolts against it. Well, then, if he withhold himself, if he choose rather to let his honour go sleep in his indifference, the office must rest undone, the counterfeit must live, the Two Gentlemen must be left at large, to walk abroad and plume themselves in the false bravery of their sireship, and challenge the honour of their estimation, and likewise receive it.

When I went back to Eton, I returned to such a different manner of existence that I could hardly believe myself to be the same being. The oxygen was taken from my atmosphere, the *particula auræ* gone and vanished. I met my old associates, but I marked them not; their greetings were as insipid to me as the cold customary pressure of the brother's hand, after the parting kiss—parting at last, but oh! before that how long and promiscuously meeting, even to the extraction of all their honey—from the soft, sweet lips of the maiden mistress, the soul of one's self, the sister of that same brother. To leave a paradise, and be brought back again to the old round, a circle squared in its most dull exactitude to the satisfaction of the most sceptical geometer the round of tasks, and at-

tendances, and pastimes, for such only they were to me—certainly not amusements; where no heart was, no interest, no sympathy!

Misery is a thing of many aspects; even parting misery is multiform: a puppy left alone by its mother is doomed by the necessity of its nature to discomfort; a schoolboy when he turns from his home, and weeps his eyes away into the very weakness of water, is a creature of forlornness and desolation; a husband deserted by his wife may feel something of annoyance; a creditor made orphan of his account, his showy configurations stultified, his hope made bankrupt by the liminary transgression of his scape-debt, is a lugubrious animal; but no other wretch, save the lovelorn stripling only, has all these attributes of anguish, lugubriousness, and what not, cast upon him, and then, to crown all, distraction upon the heap of them, to prevent all reconciliation, to keep the elements from the very suspicion of amity. It is the lack of sympathy that distresses him; if he have it not, he dies at heart, or at best lives but witheringly. This is not needed by a man of the world; his business is his devotion, his gains are his loves, the fulness of his purse is that of his heart also: but, where the beardless one has once been consentient of the said sympathy, he cannot support himself without it; his heart fails him and is flaccid; it would be a mercy to drive a stake through him, and so fix him to a posture. It is true, all this concerned me not in the fulness of its acceptance. I was not very far gone in my love excursion. I had but a taste of the quality; but even that one

was father to the wish for another. My spirits had fallen into subsidence, their buoyancy deadened and depressed to the noxious quality of vapour; I was sick of myself; I could not with any patience return to my own vomit, or lay out upon my interest the faculties that I had made tributary to my affection; I had become the diminutive of what I was, or, rather, of what I had just been. For the sentiment, though shrunk from its proportions, yet filled some space—the spirit abode in me. The latter state of my mind was better than my former one, when as yet I had not known Love—no, not even from his semblance.

This new inclination of my will pointed to a new world, and consequently my regrets at the idea of leaving Eton were somewhat softened. But they were not wholly subdued—far from it—shame upon me if they had. If gratitude be a virtue, I must have been a wretch indeed to have hardened myself at that time against its impressions. I owed Eton much; she had ministered largely to my happiness, and wholly to my instruction. I had a heart within my bosom, and now that I was about to quit her for ever, to turn from the garden that was closed upon me, and walk out into the world, how should I not shed “some natural tears” at the moment of my departure. Truly, then, I behaved like a man. I sorrowed at my leaving Eton, as I had done of yore at my returning to it, though somewhat more soberly and sedate—with a sorrow of dignity. I looked at the chubby little fellows, the host that was succeeding behind me, as it were to push me forward into life, and I contrasted



the time before them with my own coming years—an obscure, uncongenial train, seen by me but dimly in my prospect. The *valés*, as we used to call them—I must admonish my fair readers to make two syllables of the word—the valedictory effusions, that is, of the *Musæ Etonenses*, with their similitudes of the sailor, the dying lamp, and the musically dying swan, were my only poetry; I read them and ruminated them, till they realized themselves in tears, and I wondered how it should be that their authors were not already known in the world as great poets.

There was reason enough in my regrets. If I were told of any man that he had left Eton without a heavy heart, I should augur but ill of him—of his intellect, I mean, his tone of sentiment, and his general disposition. The place speaks so feelingly, that the heart that does not respond to it at that season can be nothing but a lump of flesh, spiritually deaf and dumb; fit only to be fried and served up with a garniture of bacon—and that the nobler portion of the dish. The very locality is as poetical, or, in English, as *creative* to the imagination, as a landscape of Iriarte, or an Italian scene of Turner. If outward imagery impress itself upon the mind, as it surely does, where have you, where, at least, in England, a nobler environment, an outline more magnificently filled, a scene where the young mind can better hope to feed itself to greatness on the contemplation of surrounding objects? For the College grounds themselves, the amplitude of space, the prodigality of wood and water, the varieties of light and shade, of openness

and sequestration, all this, with the rushing of the "arrowy" Thames, and the aspect of the "ancient towers," would consecrate the spot in the poet or painter's memory. And then the commanding castle, not only of kingly magnificence, but itself an actual architectural king, enthroned upon his heights, crowned with his embattled diadem, and wearing it on his brow most royally. Considering these things, I persuade myself that there is a Genius of the place, and that, as Cowper tells us, it would be idolatry with some excuse were we to do him reverence there.

And surely it cannot be said, as of the painted mask, that this so fair a face is without a spirit to animate it. That spirit has been at work through the whole body since it was first framed, and will yet, I trust, for long ages to come preserve its vitality. It is the spirit of classical composition; a simple word, but spreading in its significance over a mighty space. Poetry, ethics, and history—evangelical, though not polemical divinity—all these are within its limits; and, when these are exhausted, it will be time for our evil-wishers to cry out against the narrowness of our range. Greek and Latin are taught there, not as the dull and malevolent would have it, merely as learning, but mainly as the means of thinking; as the interpreters and exponents of ideas in written composition. It is true, we do not busy ourselves about many minute things; we are content to feed one channel fully, rather than to make a multitude, and then starve them by the scantiness of our supply; to train up the trunk for a while in the singleness of its stature, that so it

may grow to strength and vigour ere we encourage the offshoot of any collateral branches. But truth has no need of repetition. I say then, at last, that no man will ever lament the deficiencies of Eton education who shall have made the most of its advantages.

## CHAPTER X.

Time on my brow hath set his seal;  
I start to find myself a man.

My period was now drawing to its close, and I was to go forth into the world. At that time my thoughts were so occupied by the prospect immediately before me—my hopes, and fears, and anxieties for my future life crowded upon me so fast, that I regarded my present self but little. I never thought of taking my actual measure; what I was to be in future was all that I considered. Now, however, at this distance, and with my acquired experience, I am enabled to make some estimate of the advantages that I was to carry into life with me: briefly, this is the sum of them.—In the first place, I had lived feelingly. The issues of my heart had been kept running; my affections had been cultivated and cherished, partly from my circumstances, partly from my course of reading and general habits, and again, in some respects, from sheer accident. No one, unless this be true of him, can have any chance of arriving at largeness and elevation of mind, still less at amiability of disposition. But I was in the happy predicament, and consequently I had that chance; to what purpose I have availed myself of it is another matter. Here, then, was the first point made good. Again, I had laid up a

considerable store of reminiscences on many subjects, or, to use the common phrase, of general information. In childhood, my books had been my chief amusement. I was allowed a free range, and therefore I took to my reading kindly. I was seasoned thoroughly to the taste. I felt an interest in almost every subject, and it is only this interest in things agreeable to us, and indulged to us withal, that can impart to us in childhood the warmth and animation of spirit, so needful to insure success in our studies of mere duty—our daily taskwork. This general information, it may be said, is of no particular use; but I deny the assertion. It diffuses a prevailing light about our path; it is like the scintillation of the old mining lamps: each single spark, in itself, has no perceptible effect against the darkness, but, taken all together, they serve to illuminate, faintly, indeed, but yet perspicuously, the space about them. Such a light as this enables us to see our way, instead of being reduced to grope it; to recur to reason wherever habit fails us; to walk by judgment, and not only by landmarks.

Moreover, I was practised in composition; I had been drilled for long years in that great redeeming discipline of my school. I had got an habitual power of thought, and that was the rudiment of my future rational one. I had made friendships, and enjoyed them; I had felt the expansiveness of an affection warmer even than that of friendship working through my heart; I had been an actor in many scenes, and those of a kind not always accessible to boyish expe-

rience; I had observed the manners of many men; already I knew something of the world.

Besides this, I was in possession of divers good principles, instruments of the intellect working most effectively in their way; principles I call them, for, unfortunately, with me they could hardly be called habits; I wore them but loosely and irregularly, nevertheless there they were in my mind—the principles of reading, and speaking, and talking, and thinking effectually: I had not as yet exercised them into developement, but they were extant still—not extinct, but in abeyance: I could call them forth at any moment and put them upon their service, as afterwards, by God's blessing, I did.

Above all, I had acquired the treasure above price, the faculty and habit of devotion. The uses of this faculty, its influence upon the intellect as well as the heart, I have already endeavoured to set forth. I will say no more, for all that I could say must be short of the just proportion: but thus much I would observe, that those who love not God are generally self-lovers, and to such, if not for any higher motive, yet for the satisfaction of their self-love, I do most heartily and most sincerely commend it. So shall they have their salt in themselves, they shall be seasoned to satisfaction; the flatness, and staleness, and corruption of the world shall signify nothing to them.

So stands my account with Eton. Would there were more of reciprocity in it; but on one side are figures beyond arithmetic, and I have nothing to set against them: not for a doit am I her creditor. Such

a thing is proportion; nature and custom alike will both have it so: mercies are measureless, and gratitude is but a scanty source. True, I have used occasion vilely, I have waived it like a beggar from before my gate; but, if the harvest has been poor, the poverty was native to the soil, and stood not in the care and cost bestowed upon it. How then shall I requite thee, thou best of foster-mothers, fullest of the sincere milk, the milk of kindness and good nurture? Worthily I cannot; but wishfully that I will, in prayers, and hopes, and in all fervency of protestation. Thus, then, would I say unto thee: Live and prosper; may thy name be a blessing, and thy good name a rich jewel, a fair inheritance for thy children; mayest thou be full with all abundance, and pour forth thy hundreds through every portal; may princes frequent thee, and leaders of the people celebrate thee with their sons; may the king's favour fall graciously upon thee, as the latter rain; so shalt thou show as the ancient turreted Cybele, overflowing with good gifts and graces, rejoicing in thy motherhood, honoured in thy offspring, and seeing, whithersoever thou lookest abroad, thy labours exalted, thy children in high places; may thy fields be ever green, thy ancient elms maintain themselves in their estate; may thy river be true to his allegiance, ever in his course, kissing thy feet with all fondness and humility; and thy entire memory—nay, rather thy living glory—may it be fresh, full, and poetical, as in the song of Gray; more than this, may thy sons estimate thee duly, according to the measure of that which thou wouldst have meted to them, rather

than that which they may have taken into their bosoms. Above all, as thy prosperity increaseth, so may thy good works go before it to prepare the way. The horn of righteousness that thou hast exalted, may it continue to enforce thee; the standard of salvation that thou hast set up, may it bless, as it must hallow, all thy energies, and rally the faintheartedness of thy friends around thee: surely in this sign shalt thou conquer. Walk not so entirely in the old way but that the new light may shine about thee, and shed its sweet influence upon thee; so shall thy fulness break forth to the right hand and to the left, and fill the whole land; thy enemies shall be put to shame, and thy friends shall wonder at thee.

I was now entering another period of my life: I had emerged from boyhood. *Oh! nec adhuc juvenis nec jam puer utilis ætas*—useable that is, but, alas! how seldom made useful. I had to leave my old friends and familiar fancies and bind myself to new interests—enlist myself in the service of the world. The colouring of the sunrise, the glow of the early morn, was dying fast away; the day was set in fully; I had to look abroad and make provision for it. There is a sense of insufficiency in a boy—a shrinking, painful, self-abasing sense—that makes him dread the very idea of a profession; of any other at least than the sea or army, or such like, where there is little or no collision—none at all in the first instance—no conflict with the worldly interests of others. The youngster is put into a groove, and there he must needs run on: he gets forward without any effort of his own, by the mere



mechanical contrivance of the thing ; he has no care of the morrow—no professional care, that is—any more than a sparrow or a lily. But I had no such chance as this. If I ever felt within me, as, indeed, I had most often done, any stirring of the soul—an instinct at the scent of blood—a military propensity—my parents had not chosen to indulge it : they overruled me to other destinies. I was addicted, or they had heard so, to book learning, and therefore I was sent to Cambridge and entered at a great college—great bellied that is, but with a heart in its belly no bigger than a pin's head, reversing the quality of the bee—the *ingentes animas in parvo corpore*—big, not in pregnancy of promise, but with a most lethargic dropsy : great in itself, but in its progeny most curiously diminutive ; a mountain overteeming with mice : a pitiful old sow condemned to support at once her pigs of many successive farrows, the older ones loth to give place, and holding still on with their younger brethren, battenning there and fattening, not for profit but for curiosity and show, to prove how the largest possible load of fat may be laid upon the smallest proportion of bone and muscle. There I was to be admitted—in the Latin sense, I take it, of the *admissus equus*, and that too a double sense : but a truce to parables ; as Solomon says, there is no end of making them. However, for my journey thither ; I well remember it ; I went alone by the stage coach, anticipating discomfort, and therefore prepared to turn into a reality every appearance of it. The weather was dark and lowering, mist and rain and cloudiness had all the predominance—on my faith, a most do-

lorous day, of the kind that makes one shrink within one's cloak at the very aspect of it. The atmosphere sat heavy upon my spirit, sinking it deeper and deeper into depression. The country about Cambridge, as Robert Hall himself tells us, even on a mind so powerful as his wrought most wofully; it depressed him to the level of its own flatness. One feels there like a turkey upon a plain; one can't rise above it; one is powerless to take wing—

Velle videmur et in mediis conatibus ægri  
Succidimus.

The face of the country was without a feature; a country of fog and rain—

*Regio digna prorsus quam cœli continuo commingerent.*

There was no character in it that could impress itself upon the blank of my soul. I looked around me for comfort and could find none. Time, however, will on, albeit the spirit may drag back and sink in stagnature; accordingly in due course I got to my journey's end. But I was no gainer by the achievement; the despondency that was in me only darkened into despair. The vacation was not yet over; the streets were as dull and disconsolate-looking as the day itself—a city without a soul to enliven it. This, perhaps, was all the better for me in the condition that I then was. A quick succession of objects on a close-hauled spiritless humour, is like a tide running in upon it; it forces the mind upon its wake, it prevents it from standing out and feeling itself at large. So far, then, it was well with me. My own gloominess

was not darkened into a deeper shade by the light-glancing activity of the things about me; but the trial was yet to come. First, there was the admission, matriculation I think they call it—a birth not to a mother who dotes upon us, and lives only for us, but an adoption, an apprenticeship rather, to one who has little or no concern with us, who leaves us to take our chance as it may come, to live or perish intellectually, sink or swim as the tide may serve us. With this, the ignorance that knows not even to ask, the gaze of strangers upon our forlorn, gaping, untowardliness, curiosity without sympathy, the daintiness of our raw shrinking sense turned and twisted about by the hard hand of custom; this, as it seemed to me, had it lasted but a minute longer, must have been utterly insupportable; then the hurry and skurry about furniture, to be dragged despairingly in the mire through a long dismal day, the consciousness of imposition, together with the weakness that will not, or dares not, vindicate itself against it:—this was the moral of my day, the first of my freshmanship. But, if the day was dark, what should the night be? Heaven defend me from its recollection; and yet how shall I forget it?

A dreary, cold, vast, comfortless room in an ancient building; a room ancient in itself, but without any character or interest of antiquity; here and there a chair or table, as completely lost in its immensity as the fragments of a wreck in that of the ocean. To occupy such a place as this in joint tenancy with the rats; to

find the remnant of one's comfort consigned to the keeping of an old, dirty, hard-featured, coarse-spoken bed-maker; hopeless of all help, remote from all friendly communings: such an evening as this, the first that I passed in college, I would not encounter again, no, not for a whole year of a Mahometan paradise: so entirely does our happiness depend upon the force of our character. Go forward; be bold; whatever you do, do it confidently, and give yourself to it wholly. I can imagine that even the veriest villain, if he be, indeed, a consummate villain, must be more content by far and better pleased with himself than his half-faced counterfeit; and this, simply, by force of the principle above stated. As for myself, time, experience, and thought, but chiefly the last, have given me a certain force of mind. I am well assured that the grievances I have just mentioned would be trifles light as air, mere shadows, if I were again to encounter them; they would weigh upon me just as much as a straw upon a pyramid; I should break them as green withes, as tow against the fire. The desolation that is without, by force of what the schoolmen call antiperistasis, suggests to me the comfort from within—the resources of thought and imagination. They would people the forlorn chamber with a living host, and on the dead blank wall would they trace their airy symbols, their significant surmises, the strong characters of their creativeness. "What," said the nobleman to the sage, "have you got by your philosophy?" "Society in myself," was the answer: and it

was a true, and forceful, and sufficient answer; it does honour alike to the philosopher and to the spirit that had so instructed him.

But, as for my own poor person, I was at that time short of a great faculty—that of self-sufficiency; a faculty generated out of habitual activity, energy, and purposed determination of mind; the results of regular and continual mental exercise; this I had not acquired, and, therefore, all my other acquisitions were comparatively little worth. Other “good havings,” as Shakespeare calls them, I was master of—such as the particular methods that I have described as my auxiliaries in reading and other cases, together with one quality besides that I have nowhere taken credit for—that of taste; in other words, the sentiment of beauty, the perception of whatever is lovely, and natural, and poetical; and so far did this sentiment overrule me, that often in my young days at Eton have I chosen to miss my turn, to forego the order of my recital, merely that I might have the longer time to dwell upon my dear subjects, to hold converse with Horace, to commune with the spirit of Virgil, to drink a long continuous draught of that delicious poetry, and compress it, while I might, upon my palate. But this delicacy of taste, apart from determination, is but a feeble feminine delicacy. Like the moon, it “pales its ineffective light;” it is a kind of pearl—a precious thing truly—an exquisite jewel, and yet no way fitted for common currency and traffic, but rather abhorrent from them. So it was with me. The tendency of my taste was to the shade rather than to the open world,

the glare of day-light. This is pity; the more so, because here the thing that is pitiful is lovely also. The fact is that I did not pursue my purpose far enough; for to those only who venture wide out, who persist long enough in a given path, belong the ripe fruits of perseverance—forwardness, steadiness, and definitiveness of aim. Of these I had none; though in truth all the methods of instruction, and of self-instruction particularly, are good either for these or nothing. All such means and appliances may be regarded as the tributary streams of a great river—of thoughtfulness; wherever one falls in with them, if one goes along with them far enough, if one persists in following their guidance despite all sorts of petty difficulties, one is sure to get at last to the main stream, and there we are at once in deep water; our course is a smooth, regular, and easy one; we go along *secundo flumine*; the voyage of our life is no longer bound in shallows and in miseries; our force of mind, our native current, is tide, oars, and sails to us: but if we pursue these preliminary methods, these tributary rivulets, only till we encounter some difficulty, and then fall back like so many Fainthearts in our pilgrim's progress, then all is weariness and vexation for us—a labyrinth without a clue, an inextricable error; with hypochondria, the black, deadly, venom-sweltered spider, lurking in the close corner, and meditating to dart out upon the poor wretched fly that may have chanced to entangle itself there.

I acquired this habit afterwards—the habit of perseverance to the very point—and it was worth to me one

of the chief blessings of my life. Here I must be allowed to pause and moralize a brief moment. I would guard every student and self-instructor against a frequent, but most fatal error. I have proved it dearly ; it made a boy of me, or, I should say, kept me in my boyishness, years and years after I should have been a perfect man. It is expounded in a few words. George Whitfield, I think, or one of his contemporary Dissenters, has told us, that Satan tempts us sometimes by ceasing to tempt—that is, by pretending to give up the contest and hiding himself away ; and this is one of his most dangerous temptations. Then it is that we are given over to our confidence—our confidence lapses into security—our security into supineness ; the wheel, as the poet says, is come full round, and so we are brought home again to our old habit. Even thus we fare with our difficulties. In the first place we make monsters of them by force of our imagination. We fancy them as things beyond hope, utterly insurmountable. However, upon some strong suggestion we are induced to betake ourselves to the work, and that work, to our abundant surprise, we find easy enough, if we only set ourselves to it in the right method—the method, that is, of ascending by regular steps, instead of attempting to overleap everything at a bound, or by a succession of bounds, and so to get at once from the bottom to the summit. This is the fool's effort ; but, if we proceed in a rational way, we see that our presumed difficulties are rather shadowy than substantial ; the way is clear, the prospect is open, before our eyes ; our success is in our hands. Well,

and what then ? Surely, as we near our game, the scent is warmer and our exertions should be quicker. The moment that our enemy is giving way is the moment of all others that we should press upon him ; so say Reason and Experience, but Confidence is no good listener—she regards them not. In almost all processes of study—of study, I mean, for the mind's sake, and not for any special object—we foil ourselves in this way. When once we have our mark in sight, or rather, as soon as we have a general notion of it, we are content so. We view it as we would a mountain in the distance. We care not to go up to it ; a little more perseverance would have saved us, and a little less has ruined us. We remain short. We pretend to fathom with a line that does not reach to the bottom, and judge of the difference as we may, by the eye or otherwise ; in short at haphazard—*acribus initis, incurioso fine*. Thus the acquisition is made uncertain, and, what is vastly more important, the exercise is lost, the discipline, the assurance, together with the habits of mind arising from them. One half of the world is deterred from all good purposes by imaginary danger and difficulty, and nine-tenths of the other half are sent to sleep on the way by their own security. *Faciunt næ, intelligendo ut nihil intelligant*. The hare makes a strong start, but slumbers away the results of its first success ; the tortoise plods on, and so makes its assurance safe. Once more, then, let every man rest his hopes on his perseverance. There is scarcely any one without his infirmity, and no one at all without the means of conquering it. Do we



complain, as most of us have reason to do, that from lack of readiness, promptitude, self-possession, or whatever else, we have no relish of general conversation; that we are compelled, in spite of ourselves, to hold, not our peace, but our disquietude and vexation? here we have our remedy :—

Sanza la qual chi la sua vita consuma  
Cotal vestigio in terra di se lascia,  
Qual fumo in aere, od in acqua la schiuma.

So of oratory, so of composition, of law studies, and medical studies, and theological studies; in short, all learning and accomplishment; and success must derive itself hence, or else be confessed bastard. Genius without it is a mere fever—a heat that consumes instead of strengthening. I entreat you, then, above all earthly things, make a point of perseverance. Persist unto the end. It may be said truly of difficulty, what is said fabulously of the devil—talk of it, think of it, and forthwith it will be present to you; for one substance of it, as the poet says of grief, there are at least twenty shadows.

But I am wide of my professed subject. When I was last upon it, it was just at my entrance into the University. This is the most important point of a gentleman's life—nothing else is comparable to it; and yet of all others it is the one most absolutely set at hazard. Set? no, thrown I should rather say—committed to the fortune of the die. Generally a man sends his son to college as if he were sending him to a campaign, to take his chance there through good hap, and

evil hap, and every kind of hap. He considers him, in short, as altogether beyond his control, and clears himself in his own conscience of the consequences. But, in fact, how does this stand? It is true that risk must be run, and no inconsiderable risk either; but much may be done to qualify it by good preliminary measures. Let a father only inquire of the College tutor, or any other trustworthy person, what may be the condition of the College? what undergraduates he can recommend to his son as his associates?—let him procure an introduction to them, and consign the freshman to a set. If the choice be a judicious one, as it usually will be in such a case, the crisis will then be past, the danger in a great measure over. Whereas, as things go, it has happened hundreds and thousands of times that the destinies, the livelong destinies, of a young man, have been fixed upon him from the mere accident of his taking his place at the hall-table for the first day or two of his appearance next to an idler, or rake, or blackguard. Conversation arises, acquaintance is brought on, familiarity perhaps ensues, our novice is in the meshes, and has not the force, even if he should have the inclination, to break through them. If one touch pitch one can hardly choose but to be defiled by it, and the difficulty is no less to wash off the pollution when one has once contracted it. It is a clinging, penetrating evil—it gets at once into the grain.

Independence, or self-dependence rather—the word is of Irish origin, but I adopt it nevertheless—is a great developer of manhood. There is an elasticity in the

young spirit like that of the atmospherical air; one may be compressed into a strange narrowness of compass; one's faculties may be reduced by coercion to the measure of a pin's point—may shrink like sinews for lack of service. But once remove the constraint, open a wider sphere of action, give a fair stage and free play, with no favour, and the spirit, twenty chances to one, will expand itself in proportion, and occupy the whole space allowed it. Here it is my experience that speaks; I was left alone, I found that I was my own master, I had a hundred things to provide, and order, and manage; I felt that I was no longer a boy, and I assumed, as of my proper right, the faculties of a man, together with the functions.

It is astonishing how the assumption wrought upon my intellect it seemed to give me, in some respects, a new mind. Things that I should have doubted upon before, that would have perplexed me strangely, I now regarded as of course; I began to take confidence for my counsellor—as indeed, to generalize my individuality, the more we live in the world, the wider our experience, the more clearly do we see, and feel, that in all things there is a self-regulating principle, if we had only the assurance to avail ourselves of it, and that we might spare ourselves nine-tenths at least of all our cares, and troubles, and anxieties. Such is the pervading folly of our lives; we seek our happiness at great charges, and therefore vainly, while we assume our wretchedness gratuitously—usurping, as the poet says, what we were never born to.

I was not happy in my outset. They turned me

adrift in the University, and there left me without friend or counsellor. The devil, as he is always at hand, supplied the vacuity, and helped me, for his own ends, out of my dreary solitude ; I was drawn into a wild set, and speedily became one of them. For a year—a college year, I mean, bating the long vacation—I never looked into a book. In fact it is a literal truth that I owned no such thing for nearly that whole time, unless book-rank can be attributed to Sporting Magazines and such like efflorescences of idleness ; as for our lecture books, there was a set of them in my room lying there loosely, prostitute to all comers, and these I seized to my own service as waifs or estrays—in which of the two rights I leave those learned in the law to decide for me.

However, during the whole of this career, I was happy enough to preserve myself from all depth of infection ; I was never a profligate. Dissipated I certainly was, but not in the worst sense ; I was irregular, rash, and reckless ; my mental faculties were dissipated, but not my moral principles nor my integrity. I lived beyond my means not merely in this respect, or that, but at all points. The details are best spared : to follow such a course through, to rake in the gutter of indiscipline, is but a filthy curiosity. Not that I have anything on my memory to shock me, though I have very much to regret. The vanities of youth weigh lightly upon the conscience. The proximity of Newmarket, the “fatal facility” of indulgence, revived my passion for the turf. All my algebra, and it was little enough, went to the calcu-

lation of the odds ; and, whenever my imagination was let wholly loose, it was off at once, by the force of its own bias, to the betting-stand and race-course. In this I had no lack of fellow-feeling ; several of my associates were as deep in it as myself, and by continual conversation we communicated our warmth, we reflected lights mutually. This was a beginning of mischief, at any rate it might be so ; but at the rate I went it was no great mischief in itself. But sin is a prolific stock, one licence makes many. Hence waste and extravagance of all kinds—horses, dogs, and tandems, drinking, and card-playing ; when the humour is once out, it breaks away widely ; it forces itself into many channels. Unfortunately at both the Universities the tradesmen are too often the worst tempters. Where there is the wish to spend money, the means are not wanting. Every youngster has more credit than belongs to him ; and hasty credit is too frequently the parent of lasting disgrace—the generating point of a long, dark line of discomfort and humiliation.

I went on in this train for some seven or eight months, and was well content to bring it to a close. I had entered upon it partly from vanity, partly from vacancy, and the remainder from my own natural propensity ; but the threefold cord, in this case, was soon broken. I felt that my vanity was rather stung than soothed by the results of its exhibition in this way ; my vacancy was left unfilled, and my original bias had spent itself to absolute exhaustion ; all this while I was only acting a part, and a wearisome one at last I

found it. If I was a sad dog, I was a lame one also ; an animal that ran not upon all-fours—onesided and out of joint. I had never been what is called by the French a frank idler—an idler with all my heart. I attempted to serve two masters ; but while I did the work of the one I clung in affection to the other. My fits and starts of intellect, my occasional philosophy—philosophy in its proper sense, the love of wisdom—were a sort of St. Vitus's dance to me ; they affected me strangely in my march ; threw me out of my propriety, and made an awkward, unseemly creature of me. I was acted upon by two different forces in two different directions. I was twisted and turned by them, as it seemed to my associates, most unaccountably. There were undercurrents in my course, cross influences that they knew not of :—hence all my eddyings and contrarieties.

*Transverso mentem dubiam torrente tulerunt.*

In the grown man, the intellectual and social qualities assist each other mutually, they are a reciprocal charm ; but not so in the boy. At so early a day the frame of the intellect is too imperfect, its faculties and its whole constitution too loose, to enable it to walk easily and jauntily. It must set itself for every act, it must do everything with an effort ; and where effort is, there is no grace of nature ; the smooth glassiness of the stream, the easy pleasure of society is ruffled, disturbed, and perished. Such was my condition at that time, my elemental, chaotic state. Whatever subject might be started, I saw, or fancied that I saw,

in it more than could be seen by my young friends. I would be importuning action with my theories ; qualifying what was with what might be ; sketching from half images, and designing from half sketches, and, consequently, making an abortion of everything. Besides, I had the torment of the apostate in me. I was a traitor to my first allegiance, a renegade to my first love ; and I repented it in disquietude. No man ever felt deeply the pleasures of the intellect, but he preferred them incomparably to those of sense ; I mean as the staple of his life, its main texture, a texture to be wrought upon, of course, and varied, and embroidered, according to fancy ; but still it must be the ground, the substance, otherwise his fabric is mere warpwork to him. The denunciations of the prophet against the deserter of his early love, the virgin of his espousals, seemed to be realized in me. I was ill at ease within myself, distracted and dissatisfied. Moreover I had already well nigh stranded myself in my worldly voyage,

By showing a more swelling port  
Than my faint means would grant continuance.

I found that I must shorten sail, and even more than that, run for a while under bare poles, or else be blown fairly under water. Luckily the long vacation was at hand. I had leisure to wean myself from my vanities. I determined to shape my course anew as soon as the tide should turn, and occasion serve me.

My health at this time was by no means strong ; the irregularity of my life at Cambridge was not at

all likely to confirm it. My dawn of manhood was standing tiptoe, as Shakspeare says, on the mountain top. My constitution was in a sort of doubtful balance, a single touch was enough to determine it either for good or evil. Happily for me, at that crisis I had good advice, and, withal, the means of following it. I had some relations at a little town in the mountain range of the Vosges in France, a place celebrated for its mineral waters. They were gone there to spend the season, and it was agreed that I should join them. I set out accordingly, and, after a week's travelling over horrible roads and through a vile country, I reached the place. From the point where I had left the Mail-post, I had five-and-forty miles yet to go. I might have found conveyances enough if I could have paid for them, but I had been an ill husband of my money, and at last utterly divorced from it. Temptations had been strong, and flesh, and spirit too, both weak and willing, at Paris and elsewhere. I was at a difficulty to make ends meet. However, as my necessity counselled me, I undertook to walk it out manfully; to tax my person, and so to save my purse; as I had been wasteful at the brim, to spare tardily at the bottom. Forty-five miles in the dog-days, over a hilly country—*enanta, paranta, catanta te*—is enough to try the strength of any man. As for me, I was shattered to pieces by it. As I got upon the height that commands the town, I threw myself at my length by the road side, and, if a waggon had been coming over me, I could not have stirred an inch to save myself. But such was my enthusiasm for fine scenery that the



sight before me, the prospect of the sweet valley at my feet, revived me at once, set my blood in flow again, and brought my heart into full action. So much so, that instead of going straight down to "take mine ease at my own inn," I lingered about there among hills, woods, and meadows a good hour at least, until the sun had taken his last look, and left me alone in darkness.

Here was a fine range for the lover of the picturesque. Valleys at almost every point of the compass, like spokes in a wheel radiating from a focus; torrents, streams, woods, ruins, and cascades, with all the other features of mountain scenery. For my first day or two, as soon as I had passed the lustration of the baths, I was out from morning to night, on foot or horseback, exploring everywhere, observing and comparing. At last I fixed my choice. Just at the elbow of a valley, at the termination of a long high ridge, I found a delicious sequestered resting place, where, like a mountain bandit, I could lie in ambush, and thread both valleys with my eye from a single point. Thither I used to go every morning with a volume of Thucydides, a small German edition, and there would I stay till the sun had measured half the heavens. In those mountain ranges the combinations are so many, the varieties of light and shade so sudden and so powerful, that there is no end of one's interest. Sameness has no existence there; one might walk over the same ground for months together, and never see the same landscape. There I made my daily pilgrimage, I and my little book together. What should have

put it into my head I cannot tell, but I had heard, I knew indeed, that Thucydides was a fearfully hard writer, and I set myself to master him. I devoted the vacation to my work; the book, the whole book, and nothing but the book. This was a great stroke; I succeeded to my entire content. I got him almost literally by heart. I was as familiar with him as with an old song; and I recommend all Greek students to cultivate the same familiarity either with him or some other classic. There is an old admonition—*cave ab homine unius libri*—Beware of the single-book man; but I should have never felt its meaning unless I had so read Thucydides. One should study a book, and know it, and feel it, *prorsus penitusque*, through and through, till one fancies that one must have written it one's self. We should have not merely a knowledge, but, as it were, a personal experience of it. We must feed upon it, and digest it—*Serpens nisi serpentem comederit non fit draco*. This is the true practice. Whereas, in general, people read, and, if they comprehend as they go on, they think it well; though all the while they grasp each successive subject only to pass it through their hands, *cursores lampada tradunt*. The truth is that the knowledge, not indeed of a language, but of national literature, is like that of human nature; books are the spirits of men; to attain it we may have many acquaintances, but we must have one or two thorough friends; we must marry ourselves to a wife, or, otherwise, we shall never be at home, nor ever know the blessing of a proper, authentic, legitimate offspring. The intellect begotten and

born of promiscuous reading—lecturience I have elsewhere called it—is spurious of course, and foredoomed to worthlessness. Even before marriage, a mere boy, one who has never been intimately conversant with a person of the other sex, feels that he is at a distance from them, he lacks assurance in their society ; but, when once that immediate union has taken place, when, in Homer's phrase, he has been mingled with them in love, has blended his being in that of another, forthwith he takes a new tone—he becomes manly in his manners, ready, confident, and familiar with the whole sex. This, I mean, is the tendency of our nature—not that it is always carried fully out—and so also in books : when we know one thoroughly, when all its darkness is become daylight to us—the spirit of its author, as it were, our second conscience—then we may go on boldly, and learn intuitively. We carry a light about with us that serves to illustrate everything else. We have got a fulcrum, and by means of it we can move any subject that we please. We have a piece of ground that we can call properly our own. We are absolute freeholders ; we have a stake in the country—a real interest, a privilege of franchise, through the whole.

## CHAPTER XI.

With knowledge drawn from nature's living page,  
 Politely learn'd and elegantly sage,  
 They seize each grace with native force of mind,  
 While puzzled learning blunders far behind.—POPE.

BUT my advantage from these excursions was not confined within the limits of Thucydides' history. Certain living pages were opened to me, and those I studied with little less interest than the records of Spartan and Athenian rivalry. Divers times, in the course of my readings and wanderings, I had fallen in with an old man, dressed country fashion, little better than a peasant, but evidently a gentleman. At first he knew not what to make of me. He would eye me somewhat suspiciously, pass on, and then turn to eye me again, in most careful perplexity. I might have been a poacher, and that concerned his office; or a woodstealer, and that also would touch him nearly; or, more likely than either, a crossed lover, or dreamer of poetical dreams, and even this might awaken the curiosity of an idle man. One morning he came suddenly upon me, and entered at once into conversation. He had served in the army; indeed, I hardly ever knew a Frenchman of his age who had not; but he had also served against the British in Spain, and therefore felt, or professed to feel, an interest about

England and her dependencies. We were soon on the best possible terms—he talking and questioning, and I listening, blundering, and guessing; but the sun was already westward over the hill, the day was far on; my good colloquist would have me, *bon gré mal gré*, walk down with him to his “*campagne*,” his country house, and take some luncheon there. There was no gainsaying him; neither words nor will were proof against his determination. I was obliged at last to go, and was introduced to his house and family. It was a poor little place, more like an old English summer-house than anything else, daubed and painted most vilely, after the French taste, by way of embellishment; in all, four or five rooms, looking, with their partitions, as if a country carpenter had extemporized them in an hour; an old deal table and a few chairs, blinds, without curtains to the windows, an ancient lady wife, and her three young daughters. Pity they were not prettier!—my heart was in its Maytide, and a single lovely face would have shed its radiance through the whole room, given a hue of gold, a visionary splendour, to its bareness and desolation. However, I was welcome, and so everything wore a charm for me. True, the daughters were not pretty; the last touches in their face had been forgotten—not pretty, and, I grieve to say it, plain; nor simply plain, but, against all my bias to believe them otherwise, absolutely ugly;—faces and figures that might almost justify our prejudice about French apishness; hollow-visaged, sallow, and featureless. But this was only while they were still; their voices redeemed them into

pleasingness. They were condemned unheard—but, upon oyer, sentence was reversed. Their eyes and tongues were busy with continual witchery to make up their other deficiencies. Immediately I was one of them. We talked as familiarly as though I had been a roving brother, just home from a far voyage. Divers brothers had they, but they were out, each in his vocation, and I did not very deeply deplore their absence; the void pleased me well—there was the more room for our sympathies. But one of these said brothers was something of an English scholar; at all events, he had some taste for our literature. There were English books about the room—Pope, Sterne, and Goldsmith, of course in the first rank, as they always are where a Frenchman is the arbiter. The young ladies had brought these few volumes over from the town where they chiefly lived, this being a mere summer residence, to amuse their solitude. It was only an experiment; they knew hardly a word of the language; they had just been trying their wits upon poor Goldsmith as I came in. Difficulties innumerable had arisen, and of course I was the referee. I devoted myself to the service in all gallantry and complaisance. The books were produced, one word explained, and then another—but this was an unsatisfactory process, and at last, by common consent, though without any express order, we sat down together and made a lesson of it. I was young and boyish looking; they were gay and artless. They felt an interest in their amusement. They were not in the least afraid of me, and when, after an hour's ses-

sion, I rose to take my leave, they insisted that I must stop and read French with them, as they said, in revenge. My vindictiveness was of no very heinous quality; I could have laughed it away, or read it away, or kissed it away, whichever they had pleased. But I was compelled to go, and yet anxious so to depart as one hoping to return—in short, to leave the access open for another visit. Accordingly, I had readiness enough of wit in the declaration of my excuses and regrets to say that I was engaged at present. The damsels caught at the word—"Oh, then, will you come again to-morrow? We shall expect you at the same time." This to English ears sounded rather too much like an usurpation of parental authority. But French fathers are generally kind souls; it is not often for ceremony's sake that they will interfere with the enjoyment of their children. The lady was out of the room, but the old gentleman took up the hint and sent it home with a most cordial assurance of his good will, and a promise that, if I would come over in the early morning, he would provide me with a gun, and take me on a forest range. This looked gloriously; I pledged myself to him with all thanks, and walked home again in a towering height of spirits, slaughtering deer and wild boars all the way in my imagination, and despising myself for the part I had taken in our paltry field-sports of England.

The next morning be sure I was no laggard; I put the very sun to shame for his tardiness; I was speedily at my trysting place, and found everything there in readiness before me. The old surintendant of the

forest, for such he was, with his gruff welcome and hearty shake of the hand, and two of his three daughters, with all the customary shooting apparatus, and their own more proper artillery of smiles, questions, and kind greetings. They had soon appointed me cap-à-pied, and sent me forth, as the ladies of old did their true cavaliers, on my sporting knight errantry. We left amidst a profusion of smiling looks and good wishes, and in five minutes were in the forest. My interest was at its height—strained even to the highest pitch of my former imaginations; I was a mighty hunter before the Lord.

*Quod optanti divūm promittere nemo  
Auderet, volvendo dies en attulit ultro.*

Here I was in that vast forest tract, reaching, as I had heard, and well believed, with here and there a few interruptions, from the Netherlands almost up to Switzerland; the wide-spreading and far-stretching woodland zone girding Nature in her sleep—in the long sleep that she had slept from the times before the flood.

*Ubi cerva sylvicultrix, ubi aper nemorivagus.*

Or in Walter Scott's translation of it—

*Would that I were as I have been  
Chasing the deer in the forest green,  
With bended bow and bloodhound free,  
For that's the life is meet for me.*

I walked along warily, like a sharpshooter in a wood, with felonious intent, and a frown of defiance on my



brow—*Spumantemque dari*. But I must leave Virgil to the readers of Virgil—no more of him. I have given too much already.

Suddenly I heard a shot fired—I started round, while my companion was screaming out to me, with all vehemence of gesticulation—*Voilà-là—à gauche—tirez donc—tirez*. I looked eagerly along the line he pointed, but I could see nothing more dignified than a tomtit, or some such little wretch, flying between the low branches. Still these expostulations were renewed, *Mais comment donc—que fait-il Monsieur ? il me parait que Monsieur n'est pas si grand amateur. Vous n'êtes pas, donc, très passionné, Monsieur, pour la chasse*. To such an appeal to my sportsmanship I could say nothing, but there I stood gaping like a fool, and no doubt got credit as one. This then was my dignity of danger. It ended as did the lives of the Decii, according to the construction of the Eton boy, "*exitus pari*." I had hoped, when I got back to College and heard from my perdricide comrades there the tale of their September exploits, to silence them into wonder, to astound them into nothingness, by the history of my forest achievements, and my exulting "*adsum qui feci*;" but it was otherwise ordained. The dimensions of my imaginary game were dwindled down in a trice to "rats, and mice, and such small deer." I walked on for another hour, humoured the impatience of my friend by massacring a poor wren or two, and then, satisfied with my doings for the day, contrived to lose, or, in other words, to throw away, the flint from my old gun; and on that plea, as there could

be no substitution for its service, I walked quietly home again—*quantum mutatus*—and yet not *exuvias indutus*. Pardon me, good reader. Pedantry is as hard a thing to shake off as the old man of Sinbad.

I returned to my young ladies—~~mine~~ I call them, for I had a property in them by right of tutorship—and, after a profusion of condolences on my ill sport, and congratulations on my return, we sat down again to Goldsmith's Traveller. This, in my judgment, is a very elegant and pretty poem, but without any such power of genius as can serve to account for its exalted reputation. I love it much more for the associations thus connected with it than for any merits of its own. However, the wise man tells us that even a dish of herbs is savoury where love is—and the lively humour of my young pupils would have seasoned a much more insipid poem. I was surprised at the rapidity of their progress. They seemed, with their piercing black eyes, to look into the inmost sentiments—through the very heart and soul of the author. What they knew of our language before they had learned by a process of their own, and one that I hold to be very highly commendable as an intellectual discipline. They used to decypher every sentence—make it out as one would do cyphers—expound it as one might hieroglyphics—by putting hypotheses—supposing probable or possible meanings, and then endeavouring to make the construction suit them. This is an admirable exercise of ingenuity, and it is the only way that one can really learn languages to any purpose; otherwise one only remembers words—and the memory is very seldom

indeed worth the pains. To this practice of these sisters I attribute very much of their quickness, for quick they were, and intelligent, and apprehensive in a very great degree—so much so, that, sitting there as their instructor, although I was no fool either, I was yet the stupidest of the party. But there was something that surprised me more, and concerned me too more nearly, than their advancement. Certainly my service was a wholly disinterested one. I had never contemplated any benefit for myself except that of reciprocal kindness; but so it was, that in the course of a few lessons I found myself marvellously improved, not in readiness of word merely, but in my general faculty; not only in the leaves and branches, but in the main trunk itself. This astonished me at the time, but I see now that there was nothing extraordinary in it; it depended not upon anything special in my case, but on an universal principle—the principle that he who instructs others is sure to better his own instruction also.

It was the answer of Priestley, when a man came to him regretting his ignorance of some subject, and asking how he should best inform himself upon it—Oh, said the philosopher, write a book about it. This may be good counsel, but, if it had been to teach that subject to some one else, I am convinced that it would have been still better. Such instruction is blest doubly, in the giver as well as taker. By imparting to others the light of one's own lamp, one multiplies it for one's self. It is like the growth of interest from capital—every accrual as it arises falls back into

the mass, becomes confounded with it, and increases its future developement. I do not mean to say that this is necessarily the case in every kind of teaching, for instance in that of a schoolmaster towards his scholars; there, whatever a boy gets, to speak generally, he gets in the way of routine; and perhaps, like the poor mill-horse, half blinds himself, or at least deadens and dulls his faculties, by the dizziness, the weary continuity, of the round. He would as soon throw his book at his master's head as ask him a question, except upon the very direst necessity; the consequence is that he is as many years about his Latin and Greek as he ought to have been months. But this is not the case that I would put. I am recommending the instruction not of mere children, but of intelligent rational young people. Such were my three damsels. Every sentence, every word was the root of a dozen questions; I was driven upon my last reserves—compelled to fathom the very utmost depths of my resources; all that I could do in the way of illustration, analogy, interpretation, was little enough for my purpose; they knew nothing of grammar, I had to supply all deficiencies, and correct all errors. This was trying work, my faculties were stretched shrewdly to compass it; I could barely answer their requirements; I hope their husbands were more successful when they took these ladies under their tutorship.

In requital of my pains, I had the pleasure of learning French from their dear lips. To teach a woman is delightful, and to be taught by her is still more so. There is a kindness between the parties, a

confidence, a sympathy—even if there be no warmer feeling. We are not ashamed of our blunders and inadvertencies. The superiority of knowledge on the one side is levelled by that of sex on the other ; I must declare myself from the poet—

'Tis pleasant to be school'd in a strange tongue  
By female lips and eyes—that is, I mean,  
Where both the teacher and the taught are young,  
As was the case, at least, where I have been.  
They smile so when one's right, and when one's wrong  
They smile still more, and then there intervene  
Pressure of hands ; perhaps, too, a chaste kiss ;—  
I've learned the little that I know from this.

I hope that this quotation may be new to my lady readers, if indeed I should ever be so honoured : it is from a bad book, but if they would read more upon the subject, if they would feel it more fully, and draw their feeling from a purer source, let me commend them to Waverley ; I would fain offer the occasion of recurring to a work of genius, that so I may in some sort strike the balance and compensate my own dulness.

For near three weeks I was a continual visitor at their little summer-house—a summer house indeed !—and truly my best feelings, my kindness, and my tenderness, summered themselves there most complacently ; so familiar was my presence, that their very gate, as I went up to it, with the morning sun behind me, seemed, in my poor fancy, to take my shadow by anticipation as conscious of my coming. But time brings all things to an end. Necessity is a hard

master, a cruel executioner. He brooks no entertainment, listens to no plea of pity, but drags off his destined ones by the hair, and cuts in twain all hopes, pleasures, and affections most remorselessly. The hour approached, and I must needs greet them for the last time. But here I saw scope for consideration. Where there has been joy in meeting, it is no such far-sighted speculation, such strange forethought of wisdom, to look for painfulness at parting: this is the law of compensation, a law whereto we are all liable. It is true there was little or no entanglement among us; no *chaude mêlée*, or, as we cold islanders have corrupted both word and sense, chance-medley of affections; consequently there was not likely to be any fluttering to get free. I know not that any one of us had dreamed of love. I protest that evermore I treated them most sisterly: nevertheless the fondness even of a sister may betray itself at parting with a tear, and that tear, as the suspicion of the elders would construe it, might be distilled from a warmer alembic than that of mere friendship. On the whole, then, I forbore my leave-taking: in fact it would have been an impotent thing; a masking of the warm hand in the glove even at the very moment of greeting. How could I put weeks of kindness, years of regret, ages of recollection, into a single instance of pressure—a momentary marriage of the hands, aye, or even of the lips? it was vain to hope it. Upon this suggestion I did wisely rather than kindly. Tears or smiles, affection or scorn, sympathy or indifference, whatever their mood, I spared them the exhibition of it; betaking myself to

the poor, pedantlike expedient of setting forth my acknowledgments, clerkwise, with pen and paper; of giving my affections to flow in ink, and quitting the whole sum of my gratitude by a score of written words.

But oh how gladly at this moment do I repeat those acknowledgments, and renew the fresh flowings of that gratitude! Years have past, hearts have grown dead in the interval, the love of many is waxed cold; but for me, the recollection falls over me in the twilight of my fancy, in my meditative musings, like the dew of evening after the hot summer day; it glistens in my eye, it melts into my heart, it refreshes my spirit graciously. The blessing of Heaven be upon that spot! as the brightness of my joy has gladdened it to me, so shall it be sanctified to me by my prayers. Should its breath ever blow upon me again, though from a far distance, should I come by chance or purpose within the range of its redolence, it shall be my religion to make a pilgrimage there. And yet I know not—vows are rash things—it must be as it may be—as the tone and temper of my heart shall then overrule me. For what says the poet—

Nessun maggior dolore  
Che ricordarsi del tempo felice  
Nella miseria—*e cio sa 'l tuo dottore.*

However, in my absence as in my presence, peace be upon that house, and upon you its young inmates. You are now, or you well may be, wives and mothers; other cares, and hopes, and duties have come upon you; but, should you ever bestow a thought upon your young

Englishman, think of him as one who never ceases in all gratitude to think of you, grieving that kindness should be so severed, that such friendship should be of short continuance. In the happy hour when you teach your children what he taught you, remember, and, if you may, remember kindly, him of whom you learnt it, and whose prayer at this moment it is that you may be zealous to employ those good gifts—that vivacity, and earnestness, and intelligence, and goodness—on the heavenly things of faith, as heretofore, under his guidance, upon the worldly things of knowledge: that you may be as studious for proficiency in the spirit, as you were, in his experience, for skill in a strange tongue: Heaven grant you but this one grace, you will have no need of any other.

While I was at the mineral waters I had read a Swiss Guide-book, Eber's I think, where the pleasures of a pedestrian tour in the mountains are set forth in very glowing colours. The hint struck my fancy, my romance was kindled by it; a walking I would go, somewhere or other—to Switzerland if possible, but this, from considerations of time, could not be. Well, then, I would cross the mountains to Strasburgh, on my way home to England. I saw no difficulty, I would hear of none; and so on the day fixed for my departure I rode off to a little town called Remiremont, whence I had some nine or ten miles to my night's resting-place. I set out sturdily on foot, confident in my strength and spirits, but unluckily I stumbled on the threshold: ere I had gone a league of my way an ac-



cident befel me that went near to put me out of humour with all such expeditions. I came upon a poor desolate village, and as I found that my spirits alone were not equal, as I had almost fancied that they might have been, to carry me through my day's work, I was fain to turn into a cabaret, where I began forthwith to tippie cider with mine host: he was a gay, gossiping old fellow, with stories enough in his memory, or his invention, it mattered not which, to wear out any winter's evening. He was soon in his campaigns, but ere he could get very far into them I left him to himself and proceeded on my way. It was Sunday. The peasantry were assembled in a mass outside the village on a piece of waste along the road, amusing themselves with some outlandish game much like our nine-pins. I went quietly on without paying any attention to them, when just as I had passed I was struck on the back by a small stone evidently from some one of the party. I am now as sober as old Time, but then I was a hot youngster—a *capellus*—

Litium et rixæ cupidus protervæ,  
Non ego hoc ferrem calidus juventâ, &c.

My blood fired in a moment, my spirits flared fiercely up. I turned on my heel, and, walking up to my men, requested to know which of them had thrown the stone at me. The man whom I happened to address, as it seemed from his manner, knew nothing at all about it, he was not even aware of the occurrence, and, staring at me with surprise, began to mimic my accent, instead of giving me any satisfaction. I saw, as I looked about me, that I could discover nothing nor yet get

anything by my urgency: I abandoned my purpose, and, turning back again in an extremity of spite and scorn, I applied to the whole set a term of infamy such as the spirit of a true man could never yet brook. They were up against me in a moment: my spokesman, obviously meaning mischief, stooped to pick up his shying stick, and I on my part, that I might be beforehand with him, caught hold of a big stone, and just as he was rising to run at me hurled it on him and struck him at the knee joint with most Homeric potency. He rolled over, whether from pain or apprehension of it I know not; but the triumph was short; immediately the whole troop of Philistines were upon me: I would fain have tried a second throw, but in stooping for the purpose I was fairly overborne by the mob and laid ingloriously in the dust. They spared me, I rather think, the infliction of their sticks, but one of them—oh for a fitting imprecation on him!—seeing that I was still bent on mischief, gave my arm such a wrench as seemed to twist it in the socket, and was felt by me in its effects for months afterwards; while a little urchin, the devil's imp I am sure, if I could but trace his genealogy, took up a handful of gravel from the road, and, flinging it into my face, tortured my eyes so horribly that I thought them perished altogether; after this I never dreamed of any resistance, but was dragged back head and heels to the cabaret that I had just left, there, I suppose, to abide the censure of the *juge de paix*, or some such functionary. My good friend the landlord came out upon the uproar, and was surprised, as he well might,

to see me brought back a prisoner of war, and in such piteous trim. He said everything in my favour—insisted that there must be some mistake—and spoke of my courtesy and kindliness in all terms of commendation. This told well for me—so also did my sufferings, and it was settled finally that I should be set at liberty, and admonished to mend my manners for the future. This was done, and tenderly enough, all things considered; but, as for me, I was dogged and spiteful, and pretending, even at the moment of grace, altogether to disregard them, instead of availing myself of my licence, I called, as any chance way-farer might have done, for some more cider. They informed me that I was at liberty to go, presuming that, as a foreigner, I might have mistaken them, but still I told them I did not want to go, I was very comfortable where I was; all that I wanted was some more cider, and when I got that I should not care a straw for them. This sort of gracelessness irritated even their French good temper; they left me and locked the door upon me, swearing that the next day justice should be done on such a *méchant*: that, thought I, as my good wit or ill fortune shall have the better of it. However the door was closed, and the room given over “to darkness and to me.” I was left to make the best use of a hard table, a still harder bench, a vile stench of tobacco, and my own moody meditations. Night had already set in, and, after I had essayed vainly for an hour or two to compose myself into sleep, my landlord, to my great surprise, belike fearfully minded for his window’s sake, or dreading a battery of his walls, entered upon

me in his night-shirt, and, motioning me out in dumb show, unfastened the lawful impediments of bar and bolt, and then commending me to the fresh air, pointed out the road that I was to take with all emphasis of gesticulation, as though he were counselling me to flee for my life and escape from before the avenger to the next city of refuge. I was doubtful to take issue ; my senselessness half disposed me to stay and brave it out, but actually I did the wiser thing ; in another hour I was out of danger, or at least in all possible security of it, sleeping lustily in the next village inn.

The next morning I was up early and again upon the road, in high force and spirits. If, indeed, I had taken my first adventure as an earnest of what was to come, there was not much in it to encourage me. Before I had been an hour on my expedition I had contrived to get pummelled, wrenched, and half-blinded. Here then was a standard of calculation ; and, to compute the chances upon it, I might fairly conclude that ere I got to my journey's end I should present in my honourable person a hospital of infirmities—a complete synopsis of casualties. But the evil was over, and so was all my concern about it. I went forward with my hopes, and left my experience to lag behind me. In fact, at the rate I went, I was not easily overtaken—least of all by the old crone. I sweated along the road at a march of five miles an hour, urging, and goading, and flogging my limbs, till they were ready to drop under me. Like an unworthy labourer upon a piece of taskwork—a hireling, to whom his day seems long—I had no care of its success, I was anxious only

to despatch it out of hand. My end was my sole object, whereas it should only have been the end of many intermediate and particular objects. I hurried myself out of calm into perturbation. I lost the considerate faculty, the eye, as Shakspeare tells us, of the soul. All this was the very extravagance of folly; but it is a folly that foot travellers of my then age, wayfarers, not for work but wantonness, commit almost of course. They are mere walking machines; once in motion they must on, they have no power to stay themselves until their principle be spent, their moving power exhausted. They are a kind of watches, they are wound up and click out their appointed time, till their force fails them, and then they stop necessarily; and, when they stop, they are silent, they are sunk absolutely—body, soul, and spirits; in a word, way-founded. Such a thing it is to make one's self a toil of one's pleasure. Oh the blessedness of the consummation!

To say truth, we are sent abroad from this country much earlier than we should be. We despatch our raw striplings to the continent ere they well know themselves at home. Literally, we transport them—for their sins, no doubt—according to the sentence of the common law, the fashionable statute in that case made and provided. But this, in the poet's phrase, is a matter of more worth than should be dealt with traditionally after the wisdom of our forefathers—a wisdom so often ending in its opposite, that is, in the fantastical folly of their sons. Seriously, the traveller must trade upon a large capital, or he can never pros-

per. He must have all his faculties impromptu—energy, decision, self-sufficiency—the *savoir faire* and *savoir vivre* of our French neighbours: else is his pleasure penance, his variety mere vanity and vexation of spirit. These pedestrian ventures particularly, of all others the most profitable as well as delightful, if rightly used, fail with us for the most part from our own insufficiency—from the default of our very capacity for enjoyment. The mischief is deep-seated; it is easy enough to trace it to its head, but very difficult to attack it there; in fact, it belongs to the system, it runs through our whole discipline of life. The time chosen for such excursions is usually the long vacation of our collegiates; this is the time, but not the right season; at that age the mind is far indeed from being mature for such a purpose. The stripling of eighteen or twenty can hardly do otherwise than I 'did. To use old Falstaff's illustration, he will have the motion of a bullet—he will speed straight on till he be spent, then fall absolutely. But now mark the difference; a few years from my first date as a traveller, when I was confirmed in manhood and experience, I tried the same experiment, but in another way and with a far other success. I chose my country. I drew a narrow outline—for it is best not to diffuse oneself illimitably—but I filled it to the full. I formed no plan, at least not fixedly and inflexibly; I left events to their course, one occasion to generate another—in short, I indulged my genius, and gratefully did it pay me for the indulgence. I preferred the byways to the highways, the herbage to the dust, the cabaret to the regular inn

the market cart to the diligence. Not a scene of any beauty but I dwelt upon it with the amorousness of the painter, till its loveliness had become a portion of my spirit, till my soul swam in its deliciousness ; not a meadow nor rivulet, nor so much as a tree of any dignity, but I bestowed on it my contemplative leisure ; not a ruin, or castle, or old desolate mansion, but I abode there awhile in spirit as well as presence ; viewing and reviewing, gazing, admiring, and imagining, lingering over its aspect, as one minded to write its history in romance—fain to imbue his spirit with the darkness of its shadow, and feed his meditation full with its forms of ancients. In all things I studied nature, but chiefly in man. In the lone cottage, the farm-house, the half-tenanted chateau, I was wont to claim the privilege of the wayfarer, and seldom without my welcome ; scarce ever, indeed, for there is a charm in simple confidence, and the closest portal of the heart, the hardest disposition, is open to it. I gave them my good thanks and the story of my wanderings, and so was their hospitality requited. Even the merriment of the cabaret, its rustic revelry, its jovial carelessness, were to me sweet society. It is there, in the holiday of the heart, the confluence of warm spirits, that one gets the love of one's kind, that our worldly mannishness is softened into the gentleness of genuine humanity. Of this the palaces of the great know nothing. It is the *sermo pedestris*, as Horace tells us, that best sets forth the sympathies of real life, and takes the dramatic character. That language we must learn, if we would know our kind, if we would be conversant with the natural man.

I was but little so conversant in this my earliest expedition, and yet it was principally for that purpose that I projected the plan originally. I had felt for years past what most "young gentlemen" are condemned to feel—and a most painful condemnation it is—to wit, a sense of feebleness, a lassitude, an universal atony. I wanted the working faculty, the practical sense and dexterity. I wondered frequently at the readiness in word, and address in act, of the labourer, the serving-man, the "rude mechanical;" people whom I knew to be illiterate, and presumed therefore that they had no right to be as clever as myself. The observation was forced upon me everywhere, but the explanation of the fact as my judgment then stood was not quite so obvious. I take the true account of it to be this—such people never dream of diffidence, at least they are not in the habit of dwelling upon the consciousness of it. They are sure of what they do; conversant with the things of practice, the results of their handicraft are certain, palpable, and substantial; they perplex themselves little, or not at all, with the vanities of speculation. Hence, they lose the habit of distrust. They either know a thing, or not, absolutely; if not, they have no concern with it, they are nowise doubtful about it. The consequence is, that their whole life is a discipline of energy and decision. They act boldly, and answer boldly, and speak out boldly; they are thoroughly self-assured. Whereas, my schoolfellows and I had been educated comparatively in the shade; brought up among books, we had reversed the poor man's proportions of learning and of doing. We were perpetually



engaged in what we understood, most of us, very imperfectly ; struggling our way on in darkness and confusion ; always more or less in a cloud ; mystified—this I take it is the orthography—by the obscurity of our subjects. Hence uncertainty of mind, hesitation, discomfort, in thought, word, and act—a deplorable lack of definitiveness. The difference between me and the greater part of my contemporaries was this—they felt it only, and acquiesced ; whereas, I was not content to be so oppressed. I felt it, and considered it, and endeavoured to redress it. I conferred as often as I had occasion with country people, labourers, and craftsmen. I meditated this pedestrian pilgrimage, I now at length tried it ; but, for this time, without any judiciousness of trial, and therefore without any great success.

Nevertheless, I did not lose the occasion altogether, though I was far from making the most of it. Men and manners I marked occasionally, not speculatively, nor in the masquerade of society, but in their homes, at their own hearths, in the looseness of their familiar habits, and the fulness of their hearts. Divers times in the dead heat of the day—the *intempesta meridies*—I solaced myself, not poetically under some sylvan umbrageousness, but in the cool roomy comfort of an old cabaret, such as one sees them often abroad, ancient, vast, and solid, with nothing of modern style or stinginess ; built for many generations, as if the builder had been forewarned that his family was to stand and fall with his house ; that in fact his house and family, as in the old phraseology, were one and

the same thing. There have I spent hours together, talking and listening, asking questions and answering them, to my own entertainment and that of a village company; astounding their ears with the majesty of old England, dazzling their eyes with her glories, and telling them how her parsons were rich gentlemen, driving about in carriages and keeping lacqueys in livery, marrying and giving in marriage, leaders, in short, of the provincial fashion, or at least its very forward followers. Moreover, how our squires were great seigniors, our lords princes, and our very cultivators of the soil, not as with them, a set of hardworn starvelings, but for the most part men of good substance in purse as well as person, clothed, fed, and lodged like their own wealthiest burghers, faring of the best, and holding up their heads almost to the level of gentlemen; all this might have passed with them, except my story of the parsons: that spoiled all, and leavened the whole mass; it was something too monstrous for them to swallow, a very camel in their throats. They conceived evidently, and not unreasonably either, that I was abusing the licence of a traveller; it passed their faith that a nation, such as I described England to be, powerful, intelligent, and Christian, could be brought even for a single day to abide such a mockery of the gospel by its professed ministers. In their simplicity they disbelieved it; I wish that I could do the same.

But to proceed with the course of my rustic companionship; I had not tact, nor quickness, nor address enough to make myself always accessible in such so-

cieties, but, whenever I could take their tone, I was delighted with the warmth, and frankness, and intelligence that I found everywhere. I hardly ever went out of a French cabaret without feeling that I had left the spirit of joyousness behind me. They are no drivellers over the bottle; they have a sufficient taste of such indulgences, but with them the taste is a harmless one. The good qualities of the Frenchman are generally brought out by liquor, whereas the Englishman, for the most part, while under that kind of influence shows his worst points only; but the French are courteous in their cups—social, genial, and jovial—and yet not otherwise than respectful.

I found that this sort of communication inspired me marvellously, that it warmed and quickened my intellect; I ought therefore to have cultivated it much more than I did, though I was far from neglecting it altogether. I remember well that I earned one day a nice savoury mess of pottage—earned it, aye, in faith, and that right earnestly—by an hour's hard work in cutting billets with a woodman; once or twice I even tried my hand at harvest work—anything for use, amusement, and experience—though this last service was too hot for me—I was soon obliged to give it over. But my great friends were the priests, the village *curés*. By-the-by, how strange it is that with us, as among them, the idea of a Christian minister should be expressed by a word signifying a person of whom care is taken, and not one who takes care of others—curate instead of curator; though, to be sure, in our actual sense of it, the phrase is too often germane to

the matter ; truer than a better etymology would make it. But these good French priests, how kind, and friendly, and courteous to me they always were ! so much so, that, after some experience of their disposition, I never failed to talk with them as often as I had occasion. Repeatedly they asked me to their homes, gave me of their best, treated me as a father might treat his child, and dismissed me blessed and blessing, refreshed by the heavenly refreshment of their good offices ; not a word of offence about religion, nothing that betrayed on their part the slightest wish to impose upon my unguardedness, to lead my ignorance astray, to make me a convert to their faith from that of my own fathers. So much was I interested in them that I took special pains to make inquiries about them ; everywhere the same good report, one consenting attestation of their zeal, their earnestness, their grace, their charity, their activity in good works ; and yet they are paid most humbly ; but then they have withal a humble spirit, a spirit suited to their fortunes, and, what is more important still, to their faith and their professions ; these are the true labourers in the Lord's vineyard, the men who are reviving throughout France, by the sincerity of their example, the spirit of that religion so long dishonoured and discredited by the hypocrisy and worldly-mindedness of their selfish, pampered predecessors. I could not but contrast their conduct with that of our own clergy—alas, the contrast !

It was by one of those priests that the sources of true Christian feeling, the peculiar fruits, were first

opened in me; before that time I had never once thought nor cared about the reasons of my profession, the holy mysteries of our religion. I regarded it only in its forms; in other words, I regarded not the essence at all. But one morning this good man, who had taken me into his house as a way-farer from a far country, and there treated me hospitably, expounded to me the doctrine of the atonement so feelingly, so vitally, as to bring tears into my eyes; this was the more remarkable as the sentiment belonged not to the locality. This may seem nonsense, but I will endeavour to explain it. In general, I think mountain scenery, and the religious thoughts suggested by it, tend rather to Deism; I have observed that bias in divers of my own friends, passionate lovers of whatever is magnificent in nature. When we contemplate such works, the idea of their great worker, of the universal God the Father, is impressed upon us so powerfully, that we would fain acquiesce, though we would go no further. The religion of the Creator is apt to suspend, and overpower, and banish that of the Saviour.

At last, to make a short story of it, a "*longæ finis chartæque viæque*," I got to Strasburgh. I have spoken of my religious impressions on my journey, and I will now say a word upon some others of a very different kind. The country between Colmar and Strasburgh, and indeed almost all the country that I traversed, the absence of great properties and great houses, the cheerfulness, independence, and hospitality of its cottage labourers, their dwelling places, uncouth,

it is true, but roomy, substantial, and comfortable, their plentiful though coarse diet,—the view and experience of all this leads one naturally to wonder what can be the use of titles, dignities, and principalities ; why in other countries, and especially our own, so little provision has been made for the greatest happiness of the greatest number ; I mean so far as government can deal with such a subject, through its laws of property and various other methods. In short, these considerations carry one towards republicanism, if not right up to it, or even beyond it. No reflecting man can travel through such countries as Switzerland, Flanders, and many parts of France, but the truth will force itself upon him ; sooth to say, my observation so operated upon me ; but as this has little to do with the frame of intellect, except so far as what I have said before is true, namely, that decided political principles give decisiveness to the whole character, I shall waive the further mention of it. To grow then to my point, I found myself once more in Cambridge. I determined to carry my projects into act, and as I knew well that it was easier to be a very ascetic, to forbear altogether, than to be moderate in my pleasures, I forswore from the time of my return all *custom* of society ; I settled upon my books—an ominous expression, ominous in too many cases of the scriptural sense of a man's settling upon his lees. The effect is frequently the same—by metaphrase from the spirit of man to that of wine, from the blood of the grape to the humour of our own veins. I say that I forswore the custom, but not the occasional use.

To give a fillip, as it were, to my course, I went from time to time into society; retained my interest in the turf; rode attendance to Newmarket; I shot, boated, played cards, and occasionally, in wine and other things, relaxed myself into the very looseness of indulgence. But these were mere starts from my regularity. In the main I gave myself over to my books—I was a reading man. One would suppose that in all this there could be nothing else but profit: not so, the balance of loss and gain was, on the whole, rather nicely adjusted. Certainly the course was a thrifty one; I saved money by it, redeemed myself from the consequences of my extravagance, and this was a great point gained; for it was scarcely possible that the intellect should run smooth and clear while it is liable at every point to be chafed, ruffled, and irritated by the snags, I think the Americans call them, of worldly difficulties and distresses. So far, then, I did well. Again I laid up a good store of learning in my mind; I acquired, what is better still, the habit of industry and application; I weaned myself from the soft bosom of idleness, the lap of luxury; with this also I was right content, and with good reason. But then comes the catalogue of disadvantages—the debit side of the account.

Youth is not formed for solitude. Here and there, indeed, the shades should be thrown in over the picture, but merely to set off the lights, to heighten their effect, and bring them out in more brilliance of relief. The mind is too feeble at that time to support itself alone: if it lean not on something else, it has hardly strength

enough to carry its own weight, much less to go forward to any purpose. The meditative faculty either does not exist at all, or, at best, is but very imperfect. A continued stretch of thought is almost invariably a strain upon it, often an excruciating agony; and even fancy—the sweet must, the new wine, which works itself through a series of processes into a liquor of price, a noble crystal clearness, if we take in its first state, before it has undergone these processes—palls and becomes loathsome to us. It is a kind of sensual pleasure; relaxation follows close upon its enjoyment. The spider is a lonely creature; there it sits darkly in its corner, concocting all its juices into venom, and spinning its web out of itself, maze upon maze, perplexity upon perplexity: such is professed solitude. But we, in our young days, should rather imitate the bee, and fly abroad early for our honey, leaving it to aftertime to qualify and dispose it, and frame cells for its reception. Then, indeed, when our life is verging to its decline, it may be pleasant, as the poet tells us—

From the loopholes of retreat  
To look upon the world, to hear the sound  
Of the great Babel, and not feel its stir.

But this is the prerogative of manhood—of firm, experienced, self-sufficing manhood. Our later age, to make a fresh illustration of a very stale passage—

Validis radicibus hærens  
Pondere fixa suo est, nudosque sub aere ramos  
Ostendens, trunco non frondibus efficit umbram.

But the sapling, so far from giving shelter to others, requires it for itself: requires it in society, comfort,



and sympathy ; all these I denied myself, not absolutely, but *sub modo*. However the measure was an insufficient one. By my own act I had interrupted the sources whence my spirits should have been recruited. The mischief was soon manifested : I began to sicken, pine, and dwindle into puniness, and yet I persisted still. Unhappily solitariness, like most other diseases, if it be not checked early, grows into strength, and aggravates itself at length beyond all hope of resistance. It was thus in my case ; the shadow continued to increase upon me. I found, indeed, that to labour in that way was to profit little ; the weight that I took into my head seemed to lose itself there, and to rest solely upon my heart. But I was obstinate in my perseverance ; fancying, with Sangrado, that if my practice failed it was only because I had not carried it out far enough—omitting to develop the principle fully. Hence, to make my system sure, and preclude all interference with it, I determined to depend upon myself only, even for my recreation, and to take all my exercise alone. This I did, and, with the occasional exceptions that I have mentioned, I made every day of my life a piece of mechanical drudgery : I became possessed with the demon of solitude. Unless one has a most glorious object to sustain one, the spirit must sink infallibly under such a discipline ; in mine, at least, there was not buoyancy enough to support it. Often, after long hours of labour, when I raised my eyes from my book only to gaze upon my blank walls, and feel the reflection of their dreariness fall upon me and strike me as it were inwardly, the sad question

the importunate "*quorsum hæc*," would suggest itself to my conscience; I fancied that I might be grasping at a shadow, disquieting myself after all about a vain show. The darkness of my mood was aggravated by the merriment of my thoughtless collegiates. I read without discretion, and therefore my much reading was a weariness of the flesh; in the phrase of Scripture, I was overwise; but it was only in the wisdom of the pedant, and so, to carry that phrase out, I was destroying myself.

On the whole, then, my prospect was an ill one, it was "odds beyond arithmetic" against me; but I was better befriended than by my own industry, and talent, and discretion: I got at last something more than disappointment for my long months of labour. My competitors, it should seem, had read with as little reflection, and to as little or less purpose, than myself. By their weakness, rather than by my own strength, I was successful, not with any brilliancy of success, but yet to the full height of my ambition and expectation. Here, then, I had found a resting place—

*Inveni portum, spes et Fortuna valet.*

My lines were laid out for me in pleasant places, in a land overflowing with milk and honey; here, if I were so minded, in the language of old Bunyan, I might pitch my tent, set up my staff, and eat, drink, and sleep out the remainder of my days. But human cupidity is unsatiable. From the effect of some strange perversity, I could not well content myself to live like a sheep, and die of the fat rot. The point that I had

now attained, so long as it was in prospect, had been the pinnacle of my highest hopes; at present I regarded it as nothing more than a kind of Pisgah—a vantage ground whence I might survey and conquer by anticipation the regions yet before me. Such is nature: present success is valued but as a stepping-stone to that beyond it; Alps beyond Alps. I had hardly achieved my feat when I began to think, with the hero of the Odyssey,

So far so well, the doubtful feat is done,  
Now forward, to essay a further one.

What this further one was to be I knew not, but I had leisure enough, and I employed it to take breath and look about me for an issue.

In the first place, bethinking me of the *versate diu* of Horace, I endeavoured to find what I was worth; to make an estimate of my powers; to analyze the elements of my composition. My method was no such bad one. I took the range of my acquaintance, and compared myself line by line with such of them as happened, each in his own way, to be more or less distinguished. This was a severe trial, and the result also was a severe infliction to my self-love, a most sore stroke; I came off but limpingly; I was wanting at all points. There I stood confessed, and self-confessed, in spite of my anxiety to disguise the truth, a very poor creature. As I have said above, in my worldly views I had been successful, I had made a good haul, I had caught my fish, and accordingly I was minded, not unreasonably all things considered, to put my net

out of hand ; to lay up for a while my classical and mathematical perplexities. As a substitute, I resumed my habits of society, but, unluckily, they had been so long disused that they were something of the awkwardest. It is true that I had the elements within me ; the principles of reading, writing, talking, and, in a degree, of public speaking, I had known and practised ; but *fuimus* was my word. I had practised them neither long nor continually ; I had just broken ground and then left my work, leaving behind me, not a fair, even channel, but heaps of unsightliness, rude cavities, in short the deformity of a crude, rough, half-finished experiment. All this I saw to the dismay of my soul, the very agony of my conscience.

What I most wanted was the spirit of cheerfulness, of easy, assured cheerfulness, the flow of conversation, the tone of society ; not that the principle itself was lacking, I had a natural genuine source of cheerfulness within me ; but it lay deep, it was liable to be obstructed, like a field drain by thorns and furze bushes, by the anxiety to excel, and the unquiet presage—a presage for the future drawn but too directly from the past—that I might chance to fail. Otherwise, when the channel was clear, the stream was clear also ; when I was conversant with my familiars, on friendly grounds, and therefore off my guard, I used to be well enough ; but, in ordinary society, those said thorns would choke me ; my learning would overlay me with ancient rubbish, my ambition would overleap itself and fall to the ground flatly, if not ludicrously. My success, such as it was, had acquired me a reputation, and the rule

that is laid down by those shrewd files, Tacitus and Machiavel, with respect to usurpers, namely, that they should maintain and enforce their government by the means wherewith they first acquired it,—this said political rule I chose to apply intellectually. I had got my reputation by learning, and by learning I would make it good, verifying old Hesiod's verse—that fame is an ill thing, easy enough to raise up, but very hard to carry. I came out, like any solemn foolish owl, in my pedantical mock-majesty, so awkwardly, and yet so affectedly, that there was not a twittering little bird of them all that could flutter and skim the air but had good right and reason to make mirth of me.

Not but that learning has its uses, if they be only understood, even in the lightest conversation. It is a maxim of the schoolmen that no element is heavy in its own proper place; and where an illustration is brought unexpectedly, unconstrainedly, and as it were by sleight of hand, from the depths to the surface, nothing is more charming; there is no such forcible spell in all the witchery of conversation. Geometricians in some cases refer their superficial lines to the centre of the earth. Foundations lie deep; it is not always mud that we bring up by probing to the bottom; things of transparent truth, of perfect configuration, very bubbles for lightness, and elegance, and brilliancy, may be brought to the surface of the water from many fathoms depth.

Nevertheless, what my Lord Coke has said of his legal lore is as true of all learning whatever, that it is like water in a deep well—it requires a powerful

faculty, much strength, and much dexterity to make it available; this I had not, and, consequently, like an awkward cudgel-player, I did not so much wield my weapon as labour it; all the flourishes that I could exhibit were rather to the danger of my own head and confusion of my brains, than to any other purpose. Still I was not content to listen. Where I could say nothing well, I would always be saying something; not for the subject's sake or that of good companionship, but merely for the sake of my own vanity, retailing my far-fetched trumpery, dealing in silly subtleties of distinction, darkening knowledge by words, that I might the better show off certain blue lights of my own;

For darkness is the proper sphere  
Where all false glories do appear.

However superficial the subject, the question, *quid causas petis ex alto*, might have been retorted upon me perpetually by any one who could read and remember Latin: in short, if I recollect myself aright, I was an absolute nuisance; I had power enough of irksomeness to put whole societies to flight with my ass's jaw.

But in this point of view I have given my portraiture elsewhere, and at full length; I will not repeat anything so nauseous: it is enough to say, that for the most part, when I went into society, I made a fool of myself—literally made myself so by my own laborious endeavours. It was not till I was alone that I came to myself again, that I was conscious of my folly and repented it bitterly, in the very gall of self-despite.

This is a sad story, but it has little or nothing pecu-

liar to me. The ill-humours that I have described were the seum of my first workings, they are common to all half-fermented intellects. Lord Chesterfield himself, that mirror of perfect polish, in one of his letters to his son, charges his own youthful disposition with the same sickening affectation and pedantry. Like him I was brought at last to see the excess of my absurdity, and set myself to cure it; cure it, did I say? no, to cut it off absolutely.

But this was not all, nor yet even the worst of my infirmities. I was in a condition of general moral debility; my growth in learning had produced the same effect upon my mind as the growth of stature produces frequently upon the body; it had left me in looseness and in lassitude. In short, my whole head was sick, and my whole heart faint. I wanted a method of life, a leading principle, a main spring of action—I felt more and more every day that my learning was a mere load upon me, a mass of unhealthy stagnature, unless I could contrive for it some determinate issue, a direct definite channel, one or more, to carry off its superfluity, and keep it continually in a running stream. For this there was but one method—the faculty of thinking, the general, habitual faculty; the moral steam-engine that forces the waste waters away from us through their appointed ducts and channels. Professional men, and men of business, have a substitute for this faculty in the continual impulse from without, the claims of their calling upon their attention. The merest fool, so long as his mind is thus employed, is happier for the most part, to take the sum

of his life's happiness, than the recluse philosopher. His happiness is higher in amount though it may be lower in kind and quality. He is confined within a small circle; he is prevented from losing himself in the vastness of inanity. If you would preserve any essential spirit you must keep it up closely, stop it in small space. This is the happiness of occupation. But for men who are unoccupied, I mean regularly and necessarily, who have many things that they may think of, but none at all that they must, as the outward impulse fails them they have so much the greater need of the inward motive—the elastic faculty of the mind, the power of thought. I was myself in this category, and I felt the want grievously, but how should I supply it?

Just before this, in the course of my promiscuous reading, I had seen a sentence from Lord Bacon, where that really great philosopher declares his opinion to be, that if a man, when he had arrived at the use of reason and reflection, were to take his mind, as it were, to pieces, break up his whole mass of knowledge, and begin like a little child to learn all anew, and take nothing for granted, such a man would probably raise his intellect to a greater height and excellence than the greatest of our race has yet been able to attain. The authority was high; consequently the opinion struck me—the glorious prospect presented to me filled and expanded my whole heart. I took Bacon for my guide; I knew enough of my own mental constitution to see that it was very indifferently put together. There could be no loss then from the trial—*Fiat experimentum in corpore vili*. I was anxious to



analyze it into its first principles ; not merely to reform it, but to reframe it altogether. I well remember the moment when the thought occurred to me ; it was a fine evening in September ; some young friends had been “wining” in my rooms, and had just left me ; I was sitting at my window looking out on the rich scene before me in that mood of richly tinted meditation, that warm yet deep sunset tone, such as will sometimes gleam over us when our joyousness is sunk below the horizon, when the full light of society is relapsing, with a gentle adumbration, into the shade of solitude. Repeatedly during the day I had been considering those words of Bacon. Just then they recurred to me in all their force ; I looked around me, and overhead, on the magnificence of nature ; I saw that everything else was perfect in its developement, and that only my uses were unfulfilled. Heaven forgive me for it. It has been so too long already—but henceforth, so I said inwardly, I will at least endeavour that I may be less unworthy to live among such glories.

I gave myself a day’s leisure to compose me for the effort, and then went to work in earnest. First I had to examine myself thoroughly—to take an account of my stock, to estimate what I could really call my own. This was but an unsatisfactory task—in the process at least, whatever it might be in the results. I found that I was a medley of imperfections, a mere bundle of infirmities—everything begun, and nothing well finished. As for my previous methods of improvement, I was much in the condition of a man who finds,

when he is far engaged in a complicated design, that the further he carries it the more he perplexes it, and only because he was not at first sure of his principles. For my actual achievements, they amounted to nothing more than the collection of a quantity of raw material, a heap of book-learning. Still it was evident that the "*nisus formativus*" had been at work, and that, through my whole mass, divers prominences there were, promising bumps in my composition, that portended something doubtless, although the protrusive force had not as yet wrought upon them sufficiently—had been unable to develope, and magnify, and exalt them into horns of strength. Here then was a wide field before me—a kind of phrenological map. The only question was, where I should begin, what province of that vast region I should first essay to subjugate. This was somewhat difficult to decide, much as I had to do, and small as my power of doing then seemed to me. However, by some means or other, I came to the right conclusion; I lacked much, but I knew that I lacked one thing chiefly, to wit, energy; and this is the great principle, the spring that sets the whole machinery in movement; the antagonist of Time, acted upon by him, as a wheel is by a stream, only to be set at work, and so to achieve great ends, where the feebleness of an ordinary mind would have been swept away and carried downwards to perdition. I knew that all the time that I had lost—the days, months, and years—were gone from me, now and ever, mainly from the default of this principle; that its absence was invariably supplied by listless-

ness, weariness, self-annoyance, and the whole nervous host. It was here, therefore, that I made my first point : I began wisely. It is true that I wanted this same energy for great purposes, but I saw that my only hope was to try it first in smaller ones, to exercise it in things within the power even of my own feebleness. The thought was a good one, and I entertained it according to its deserts. I became energetic in small matters ; I took care of the pence, knowing well that the pounds would take care of themselves. All that I did I studied to do promptly, and briskly, and decisively ; whether it were to greet a friend, to give orders to a dependent, to walk, or talk, or read a newspaper, if it were only to pour out a cup of tea, to use a shoeing horn, to shut or open a door, still I went smartly to my work ; I was active and animated in all things. Whatever my hand found to do I did it, as the holy proverb recommends us, with all my might. If the edge were blunt, I put to the greater strength. When I felt the spirit of remissness stealing upon me, I stirred my faculties against it, I would not suffer myself to languish. But even here I proceeded by degrees. At first I found it necessary to humour the perverseness of undisciplined nature. I proposed half an hour's energy. For so long, at least, I will have my wits about me ; I will be quick, active, and spirited, to the minutest thing that I undertake. This was a pious fraud. A most happy delusion ; activity propagates itself ; the beginning begets the end ; the spirit of the first minute is extended to the second ; electricity is carried along the chain from link to link, the

dawn steals into the day, and success is at last made sure. I promised for half an hour and performed—no, executed rather—performance is a spiritless word—through the whole day. Oh, that the thousands and hundreds of thousands whose lives drag heavily on, heavily and still heavily, through the loose dry sand of their worldly ways, would thus stir themselves into interest! would imitate my example, if only for one day! I require no more of them. Surely it should be their happiness. So would the spirit be sovereign, and prevail over the flesh instead of being buried in it.

I had thus acquired an energy of will, a primary moving power; the only question was, whether this energy of will could support itself for a continuance, and so pass into energy of action; it might be doubted whether I had a sufficient fund of spirits and force of character for the purpose. Happily I was in a great degree fortified against the danger of relapse—I was observant and reflective. Consequently I knew the value of my acquisition, and was anxious to maintain it. The difficulty was less every day, and the success greater. Interruptions I had occasionally, moments of weariness, hours of despondency; but the remedy was always in my power; I knew whenever my spirit was weighed down that the depression was but imaginary, real, it is true, in itself, but originating in fancy. I knew also that I had only to make an effort, to rise from my supineness, and bestir myself vigorously in any way that occurred to me,—in reading, talking, or thinking, the first perhaps most usually; and, if I could

only bring myself to be active in any one of these employments, the dark towering cloud would forthwith end, like that of the Arabian Tales, in a genius of light.

It is this energy of will that is the soul of the intellect: wherever it is, there is life; where it is not, all is dulness, and despondency, and desolation. People who have no experience of it imagine that it is destructive to the nerves, exhaustive of the animal spirits; that it aggravates the wear and tear of life excessively. But this is an idle notion, as idle as the habits and humours of those who entertain it. I leave it to any man who knows its real effect to strike the balance—to compare the exhaustion of an indolent day with that of an active one; to say in which of the two cases the subject is in better heart for work, and fitter to undergo it. Whatever we may be about, one thing, I believe, is certain, that, if the spirits are spent by energy, they are utterly wasted by idleness; at worst energy can only end in relaxation, it is superior to it for a while, and possibly at last may fall into it; whereas idleness is actually relaxation from first to last, and can be nothing else. But even this view, favourable as it is, is yet not favourable enough to be just. The fact is, that violence is not necessary to energy any more than tyranny is to kingship; on the contrary, it is the gentlest energy that does the most work. Energy, literally from the Greek, is inward workingness; the blooming of the flower is energy, the increase of fruit is energy, the growth of the body is energy; yet in all these there is no violence;

the efficacy is not destructive but vital : without it the whole frame must fall at once into corruption ; with it, instead of corruption we have life. But this, it may be said, is a refinement. It may be so, but it is true in fact nevertheless. The gainsayer will find it difficult to produce anything from the subject of surer or more essential truth.

On the whole, then, though with sundry breaks, and lapses, and vacillations, I practised energy successfully—I wrought out my redemption from indolence. And first of all I carried it into small matters, I laid my foundations low. Out of my heaviness and indifference I spirited myself into a briskness of manner and of action. This is the rudiment of the whole system ; and it is within the scope of every man, even of the veriest fool or child ; any one who lives unsatisfactorily from the default of it, as all must live who are without it, is not more pitiable than contemptible.

Next I employed it in the furtherance of my old process of reading. I used to regard the different methods of improvement, such as reading, writing, and all the rest, as distinct and independent ; each subsisting by itself, and working by its own agency. But I now found that I had been mistaken ; all these methods are merely the different channels wherein our energy should run its course, the instruments wherewith it works, the limbs and outward faculties, itself being the soul of them all, their prime mover. Accordingly I threw this soul into the body of my reading ; I read—and this is what I would counsel

others to do, if they would read to any purpose, I mean in the way of study, and for service of the intellect—I read intently, beginning every sentence smartly, and finishing it in a breath; remitting my stress upon it gradually towards the end; then collecting myself for the next by a new effort, an effort of the breath only and not of the voice necessarily, and so on, proceeding through the book. One can hardly enter upon such details, and not appear ridiculous; one may command one's own gravity, but scarcely that of one's readers. Well, let the scoffers enjoy themselves. They may have their laugh, as I have had my use and advantage. Any one else who pleases may mediate between us—try, prove, and consider—and then take his party as he will, and range himself accordingly.

This was an old practice with me, as old as my first volume; aged into oblivion, and so back again into novelty: therefore, to speak as an epigrammatist, doubly new. But the first principle of my plan was to reframe myself; to practise thoroughly what I had before practised but imperfectly, and thence only half successfully. I found the method a most satisfactory one; by its use I could master any book that I might take up—any one, that is, of serious import—in less than half my ordinary time, and with an advantage, an impressiveness, a sufficiency infinitely multiplied. Moreover I felt, as I had done before, that my mind, my spirits generally, when once they were put in course, would flow on, after the impelling cause had ceased, with a continued vigour and liveliness; nature

has so ordained it, not in this only, but in all things. Strike a hoop smartly, and it will sustain itself, and hold its course on, while the effect of the stroke lasts, and long after it was given. I remember to have been told by a friend, that he could never get the knocker of a door to speak in a tone of due dignity; he wondered how this should be—how brass in his especial hands should have lost all its brazen quality—till at last he discovered that he was too feeble in the onset; that his first stroke was futile, and that all the subsequent ones, as like engenders like, were of the same deplorable insignificance.

Next to this, or, I should say, concurrently with it, as there is a close relation between the two, I endeavoured to carry the same spirit into my conversation, to quicken my talking faculty with it. It is worth while to pause a minute or two upon the consideration of this project. It has been commonly believed, I know, that there is actually no such thing as an art of conversation; that it is a quality, an especial property, and not an art; a thing impossible to be taught any more than the use of one's eyes or other senses. In short, the notion seems to prevail that all rules upon this matter are the mere symbols, the express lineaments and features, of quackery. To be candid, though I cannot think that there is any good reason for the opinion, I will admit at once that there is a very fair pretext for the prejudice. If we were to take our experience for our reason, we should have small hope. Were we to judge of the prospect by the retrospect, it must be a mere blank. The so called



“arts of conversation” that have been written abroad by scores, and translated, some of them, into English, are begotten by pedantry upon affectation, conceited, formal productions, odious even to sickening. The subject has been vilely treated; handled, and mouthed, and bedaubed most insufferably; but I cannot, therefore, conclude that it is altogether “*inops consilii*.” However, I shall make a short lesson of it; I shall bring all my rules—the rules of my experience, and not merely of my scholar-like speculation—into a single point. Be careful that you never omit your energy; this is the life of dialogue. The truth is, that there is an association not only of ideas, but also of sentiments and sensations. This last, as far as my observation reaches, has never been brought into a system, nor ever studied, or even regarded; though, as a principle of action, it is scarcely less powerful than the former one. To give an instance or two:—No one ever expects to hear any thing pointed or forcible from a person lying on a sofa, or lounging on an arm chair. From the natural association of feelings it cannot be; his physical relaxation extends itself to his spirit, and thence to his whole intellect; his ideas flow but languidly, his energy is extinct. One might multiply examples without end, but a single one suffices. It follows that if we would enjoy society, or, in other words, conversation, for it comes to the same thing, we must keep our energies at work; not indeed violently, nor even vehemently, for that would destroy all, but gently and movingly. We must eschew all listlessness; keep our attention up, but never overstrain it;

labour nothing, say nothing, but what presents itself in course and without an effort. And lastly, as they say of a horse, keep our faculties in hand, to be holden in, or let out, at our discretion; and never, from excitement or eagerness, so overreach ourselves as to lose our self-control and be thrown off the right balance.

For years before this I had fallen into a low, drawling, lazy tone of voice in my ordinary conversation; my utterance came forth in a cloud, and had its dwelling there. From divers experiments and observations I had assured myself long ago that this was a capital defect, but my assurance as yet had been very far from working out its success. I had never had the energy to improve my observations into a method, and avail myself fully of their service. Now, at last, I attempted it in good earnest; I studied to bring myself up again from my relapse, to acquire a rapid, distinct, and articulate delivery: no man can miss this acquisition unless from some organic infirmity, provided only that he pursue it steadily and earnestly. This I had the good sense to do; I lowered myself to the humility of the little child, and learnt from the first rudiments. I employed all the means that I have before described as exercises for the voice;—recitation—the frequent repetition of the same passages, slowly at first, and then more and more quickly up to my highest pitch of rapidity; the pronunciation of foreign languages, Greek for the sake of fulness of the “*as rotundum*,” and French for that of distinctness and despatch. There are, I believe, some other

methods I practised industriously, and I wanted none else for my success. I was at once sensible of this advantage:—from a feeble, imperfect voice, muffled, or, as the French express it, veiled, to the obscurity and confusion of all features, I became comparatively, though not perhaps absolutely, a clear and satisfactory speaker; and, as my talk was more distinct, my thoughts were all the more pointed and precise. Here is the association of sentiment, or rather, for the idea has no word in English, of pathos, in the Greek sense,—subjective association, as the German metaphysicians would call it. The energy that is called to action in the tongue extends itself to the thoughts, like a circle in water, beginning at a point and spreading over the whole surface. In these cases it is not the intellect that first raises itself from prostration, and then quickens the utterance; on the contrary, we rise from the lowest end; we articulate a sentence or two with energy; this is easily done, and, once in motion, the impulse once fairly given, it is easy to go on. We blow our fire into a blaze, we kindle our intellect by the influence of our breath, of our own active spirit.

Such is the effect of enunciation. If the delivery be difficult, if, when it is brought to the birth, there be no strength to bring it forth, then is the life endangered; the very spirit of the sentence is stifled, and falls back again into nothingness. I had long been subject to this danger, but I was now generally superior to it; my mind walked freely and easily in its new method. I acquired an evenness of tone, a confidence, a complacency; my conversation, as the French

say of their language, went of itself; I was not distracted by the perpetual care and difficulty of supporting it step by step; I had leisure to look chiefly to my direction, to march on to my object.

In the course of a few months I found myself mightily improved by these various forms of discipline. Previously my learning had been a load to me rather than an instrument of strength; I used to carry it about with me, as one may see a poor crazy woman trailing after her an old-fashioned tawdry cloak, or other piece of trumpery, feeling its incumbrance, but fancying all the while that it makes a fine show and supports the dignity of her appearance. I was carrying weight, and consequently, when I went into society, I could never go the pace of my light-headed and light-hearted companions. With all this I was sensitive to an extreme on the point of reputation, jealous as a Spaniard of my credit; the more so as I knew it, in my inmost conscience, to be of very suspicious quality—one that could never bide the assay. We are chariest in general of what we have most in jeopardy, and so it was with me and my gratuitous reputation for talent. If ever I committed myself, and that was often enough—if I said a foolish thing, or was convicted of an absurd opinion—I was on the fret for days after, my whole mind was in a fever. I had an idea that learning was a kind of sacred thing, that there was something oracular about it; it was not to be handled practically, nor scrutinized too narrowly; that it was enthroned in a halo of obscurity, like that which is said to encircle the brow of kings, and that

every attempt to break in upon it was *lèse-majesté*—treason at the very least. Once, I remember it well, in a crowded college-hall, I got into a discussion with a shrewd, quick-witted fellow—a farmer, I believe, from the North. The question was about the price of labour; he treated it like a man of business, and I like a pedantic sciolist. My head was swarming with theories—I was fresh, I might have said raw—from Ricardo, Macculloch, and a host of them, and a precious mess I made of their speculations; my colloquist, nevertheless, listened to me much longer than I deserved, till at last, when my battery of hard words had worked itself to a pause,—“Aye, Sir,” he remarked very quietly, “these are book-notions, and they may do very well in books, I dare say. Your business is with books, Sir, and mine is with the world; and it’s no use to talk learning to me, else you are soon out of my depth, Sir, and your own too, if I may say it without offence.—No, Sir, depend upon it, by the time you have lived a little longer in the world, you will be all the wiser of it.” This was the substance of his say, only that he hacked with a blunt edge, and therefore the more painfully. I was cut to the very quick—confused, silenced, and put to shame. My dinner was spoiled, and so likewise was my digestion. For months afterwards I could never think of the old farmer but I felt the bile rising to my palate.

## CHAPTER XII.

And in his brain,  
Which is as dry as the remainder biscuit  
After a voyage, he hath strange places crammed  
With observation, the which he vents  
In mangled forms.—JACQUES.

BUT I was now released from my purgatory. I had won my way out, I began to feel my faculties, I had exercised them into usefulness; I was conversant in society, as one belonging to it, not as if I had fallen into it from a region of cloudiness, nor like a spirit, as Pope has imagined one, imprisoned for long ages in a folio and just escaped from it. I had acquired a certain decision in act, word, and manner, the first and most precious fruit of intellectual manhood. I was now on a level with other men; I had a firm footing in society, but I lacked the one great thing needful—the power of thought, the essence of the intellect. It is true I was no longer such a fool as to go about like the priests in some Roman Catholic cathedrals, rattling the dry bones of the ancients, and fancying that they had a high spiritual efficacy, that they would serve me for strength and sinews of my own. I had outgrown this absurdity; I had repudiated the second-hand faculty as vain, cumbrous, and delusive, but as

yet I was unable to supply it with the real one, with the genuine originative force, the self-impelling energy, described by the old philosophers as the peculiar attribute of the soul, distinguishing it from all other essences. Here was my default: I required some impulse from without to set my mind in motion. I had no such source within me as could supply a continuous stream; or, if I had, there was no channel prepared for it: hence I was but a driveller at composition; composition in the vulgar sense of the word, for as to its proper genuine sense I could compose well enough. I could put ideas together when I had got them. I could write formal sentences, stuffed with antecedents and relatives, with whos and whiches—things that should be exorcised without mercy. But I was unable to wield a subject—to work it, with all its machinery, promptly, easily, and effectively; this is the ministry of thought. I had yet to learn it, but I presumed that it would present itself in due course, and in the mean time I set myself to take in, as the Germans call it, a few of the neighbouring outposts and points of strength, as subsidiary to the grand siege.

And first I determined to write a diary; to trace out my daily life, to mark acts and occurrences, and, withal, as far as might be, thoughts, sentiments, and wishes, by the magic configuration, the real fairy mazes, of the twenty-four letters. Heavens! what an astounding process! Oh! wonderful, that, from things so puny, such strength should be ordained! Surely, the Divinity must have generated it, otherwise the soul of man could never have had the capacity to con-

ceive it. I have not a doubt but that old Jupiter's chain, reaching from heaven to earth, was made of twenty-four links, and each link a letter. Most true, the art of writing is an art of many marvellous uses, and that of diaries one of the best of them. It is to this practice that Curran and some other great men, or men of great name, current for real greatness in the traffic of opinions, have attributed their height of fortunes. And it may be that they spoke true. It has happened before now that a timely shower, a slight gleam of sunshine, has shed its saving influence upon the seed that might otherwise have perished. In fact, registration is the best security of property. It will be long ere the light of reason will penetrate into the clay of our country, the mass of our squirearchy, sufficiently to make them sensible of this. If they could only come to right conclusions upon a plain subject, they would no more endure to be any longer perplexed in the toils of lawyercraft, to acquiesce in the absurdity of our land-law—that absolute mystery of iniquity, than they would change places, they and all their families, with the workhouse pauper. But this is their own affair—or, perhaps, not theirs, but the affair of Providence. Haply, it was so destined. Gudgeons must abound, else would there be no food for pikes.

Registration, then, is the best security of property; and upon this persuasion I began to register my ideas. But, alas, even of our best acts how few are there that Reason can claim entirely for her own! Even this was not her legitimate offspring, but what they call in



the country a chance child, born between her and Fortune.

I happened to know a young lady who kept a diary—dairy, I see I have written it—well, accident is sometimes truth, and it is a kind of dairy too; where the loose fluidity of our thoughts is changed into consistence, the *lactea ubertas* of the fancy, nay, even the three times skimmed sky-bluishness of the literary lady, expressed and strengthened to a form.

One day I surprised this young lady in the very act of committing herself to paper. There was her heart in its undress, aye, and yet more, in the very[naked loveliness of its nature—a sight that my curiosity would have died to see, and yet was not to be gratified. I had a mere glimpse of the figures; the next moment they were huddled up in their white vestments, their virgin sheets, as hurriedly as a bathing nymph at the intrusion of a profane foot, or the aspect of some garish eye. I marked her confusion, and was malicious enough (this of course) to inquire into the cause. “Oh, it’s nothing at all.” Nothing! I might have answered with Shakspeare, indeed! then why such fearful precipitancy of it into your bosom?—the quality of nothingness hath no such need to hide itself. Still she persisted, and I insisted all the more—but in vain; it was the virginity of her mind, the express image of her maiden purity. Sooner than surrender it she would have yielded up to me anything that licence could have asked. There is a method in use among lawyers, of discovering a defendant’s real title by suggesting a false one, and so “by indirec-

tions find directions out ;" this is a shrewd practice out of Westminster Hall as well as in it, and one that I essayed here :—

"Well, then, I see it is a love-letter."

"No, indeed."

"Oh, but I am sure it is—a flagrant love-letter. I see the reflection of it in your face at this moment."

Nothing would serve now but the confession.

"You are excessively impertinent, but, if you must know, I was writing a diary."

"Indeed ! pray let me see it. I have not an idea how to make the most of a day. I should like of all things to know it."

But the tongue is a fast goer, and the pen, even that of the readiest writer, is too slow to follow it. Translations are bad things, and of all translations that of talk into writing is the very worst. To silence me, and get rid of my importunity, my fair damsel promised that if I would keep a diary myself, and show it to her at the year's end, she would be equally liberal—would requite me faithfully in kind. I caught at the proposal, signified my acceptance of its terms, and the next evening began practice as a diarist,—

Noting, ere they pass away,  
The fleeting shadows of the day.

I am afraid that I have quoted these lines before, but no matter, they may stand ; I cannot see why a sentence, any more than a single word, should be limited to one appearance. Wherever it is appropriate, it should be welcome.

At first I confined myself to facts ; rendering an exact account of my comings and goings, eatings, drinkings, and visitings, and leaving the rest to Lethe ; sinking the heart, soul, and mind, even against the nature of their buoyancy. But I soon discovered that I was in error ; my facts were barren, dry as the remainder biscuit, as the bones of pilgrims upon the desert. The colouring of our life is in our feelings ; these I must depict, if I wished to represent myself aright ; this I undertook to do. I did it from that time ; and the consequence is, that I can look along my course of life, pore over it from point to point, and see myself reflected there, darkly or cheerfully, as the moment was one of cloud or sunshine. I can compare my past being with my present one ; meditate upon my changes in hopes, wishes, and opinions ; and speculate upon the changes yet to come—changes still deeper, I trust, and of more solemn adumbration. Repeatedly, on glancing at my diary, have I started to see my ghost, to contemplate in clear outline the image of my former self, and as often have I been tempered by the contemplation to a new and a better spirit.

Miss —— demeaned herself most traitorously ; flung her good faith to the winds ; trampled upon the sacredness of her promise. However, in the sincerity of my heart, I here assure her of my forgiveness. She has since submitted herself to a husband, and to him I resign my right. The thoughts of her soul, the recesses of her inmost self, it is for him only to penetrate. In the mean time, I have my advantage—one that no

perfidy can filch from me—I am become a confirmed diarist. I thank her for the example of her practice, and commend it most earnestly to her continuance. Peace be with her, and prosperity, and all happiness.

So much for my diary. I had secured one point, and I proceeded to make good another. I had read a multitude of books, but I found upon survey that my knowledge, except as to single facts, was not much augmented by them. My management of them was much the same as that of Virgil's Sybil. Instead of committing them to the recesses of my memory, and there laying them up in some rational order, I placed them, as she of Cuma did her leaves, barely within the vestibule. There possibly they would stay for a brief moment or two, but, as soon as the door was opened to give access to any new guest, they were dissipated by the draught, scattered in all directions, and as worthless, or nearly so, henceforth, as the literal dry leaves themselves. My memory had always been good, and it was so still; but to remember a heap of facts, and to forget how they were framed into a system, is as useless and as absurd as it would be for any man to amass a quantity of watchworks—springs, wheels, and cylinders—and never trouble himself to inquire how they were to be put together. In memory, and indeed in all mental processes, just as in machinery, the design is the main thing; it is from the general drift, the survey of the system, and not from the assurance of its individual facts, that the intellect is instructed and enlarged. To expect to learn all the sciences by the sight of a confused heap of letters thrown together

upon a table would be a vain thing; and yet those very same letters, when properly and orderly ranged into words, sentences, and treatises, would lead us infallibly to that end, if we had only the requisite attention and perseverance. The mind is in the same predicament; to be subservient to it, we must not only remember but recollect: the distinction explains itself by the decomposition of the two words.\*

To rectify this confusion, to make a bridge over the chaos of my memory, I hit upon a new process—new to me, although old enough to every inquirer into such matters; it was no other than a kind of artificial memory, a form of Grey's *memoria technica*. When I wished to get up a book, to follow the main course of its theory, I used to select a word, or a syllable of a word, from the exposition of each leading principle, frame the whole into a sentence, significant if possible, and in that way I could secure its carriage in my memory. It was a concentration of nutriment, a comestible essence, compacted in the closest form for the travelling intellect.

I mastered a variety of books in this way, thoroughly and effectually. The truth is, that in the ordinary way of reading we presume, when we get to a volume's end, that its whole order and arrangement are duly impressed upon the memory. And so probably it is, if the volume be a novel or romance—anything that developes itself as it goes along, and requires no effort of attention from the reader; but where the

\* This distinction when I made it was new to me, but I now find that in itself it is as old as Aristotle.

intellect is tasked, as it must be if it is to be improved, the case is far different. One chapter effaces another; the last is first, and the first most usually last, in the order of our remembrance. Consequently, there is no whole; nor yet, to use a word for once in its true meaning, any wholesomeness of use or digestion. The system is lost—the design is vanished altogether.

To this the artificial process is a pretty sure remedy, when rightly applied. For me, the arbitrary symbols that I have spoken of, the chosen words and sentences, served me as stepping-stones over the stream; they were the marks on the trees, whereby, after long wanderings in the wood, I could retrace my way, and was at home again. I could pass and repass by their observance; the points and bearings of my course were made familiar to me. One of the highest praises that a Frenchman can give to an artist, an advocate, a general, is that his *coup d'œil* is effective—just, quick, and comprehensive. Well, the Frenchman has my assent; and this quick-sighted, and full-sighted, and clear-sighted faculty, is to be attained no way more expeditiously than by the use of this artificial memory; a use that may show us at a glance, represent to us in the quickness of thought, a system that we have been learning laboriously for days and weeks together.

In most of my other devices for self-improvement there was something of originality. I fancied myself an inventor, and not altogether without reason; but my next had been worn threadbare—as stale as affectation itself. This was nothing else than the compila-

tion of a commonplace-book. The term is a strange one; strangely perverted and abused from the nature of its birth. It would be curious to compare the many points of difference, and the few points of resemblance, between the ancient *loci communes* and our modern commonplaces—but this is the affair of the grammarian. I must be content to hold myself to my subject.

I owe the adoption of this expedient, together with some other advantages and many blessings of my life, to the favour of the softer sex. Once, at an evening party, I was requested by a young lady to write something in her album—to mar with “foul defeature” the lustre of its virgin purity. This I refused. I loved the innocence of the white page better than to contaminate it. I was steadfast against all solicitation. However, the volume was revealed to me; notwithstanding my ungracious contumacy, I was permitted to have a sight of it. I saw at once that it was a mere matter of transcription, a cento of approved passages from Moore, Scott, Byron, and their imitators or emulators. Could I cherish any design against the peace of a young woman, I should have rejoiced above all things to see her in this employment, and studied to turn her taste to my account, to fan the gentle fire within her bosom, her vestal flame, to the height of my own raging passion—but this was not my disposition. All that I did was to express my surprise at her laboriousness, interrogate her as to the use of copying what was open to read everywhere, and recommend her another plan. But she doted on her

prejudices—all my remonstrances were vain—I was unable to prevail with her. “Well,” I said at last, “the hint, at all events, is too good to be thrown away; if you do not choose to entertain it, I will work it out myself, and on my own account.” It was said and done. I began my book of commonplaces, and in a short time had made much progress with it. Not that I walked in the old ways; I was far too much devoted to my own sweet will, my humour of independence. I would never copy out a passage; lines, phrases, and sentences were my only ware. In this I am of opinion, even now, that I did wisely. These commonplace-books are good for very little, except as stores of material, as repositories for things of after use. They are not for show, but for exercise. It is evident, then, that if you give a young architect a house ready built, and intended so to stand, you do not give him the materials for building one—for employing himself in his craft, realizing his instructions by his practice. For this he has need of bricks and mortar, and other the like implements; not of another man’s labour, which does but preclude his own.

I drew some benefit from this practice, but it was not an unqualified one. It helped me so far, as it set me on the watch to seek out in a book whatever it might have of brilliant or of elegant—happy turns of expression—clever phrases—witticisms sharpened to a point. To descry these things I had to examine each sentence in its detail, to look a work through, and not, as it had been my wont, merely over. I began to know the genius of the language, to be conscious of its spirit;



and so I enjoyed my reading the more. My taste was refined and quickened ; I was familiar with the merits of composition, and could therefore appreciate them.

Then, on the other hand, there were disadvantages. A child with his first whip, a purchase of an hour back, will be for ever cracking it importunately, in season and out of season ; and so with all novelties, fine new phrases among the rest. When I had got my jewels I could not rest satisfied to keep them in my casket ; I was ambitious to exhibit them at once, to make an occasion for their display, if I could not find one. Thus says the poet—

The fool hath planted in his memory  
An army of good words ;

and it was of me, and the like of me, that he spake it. Nothing is so nauseous in society as to see a man, instead of following a subject where it leads him, twist and torture it most unnaturally, in order to suit it to a phrase that he has prepared, cut and dry, for the service ; leading the conversation into an ambush, only that he may give play to his sharp-shooters when he has tricked us within their reach. But these are the faults of wantonness—mere luxuriations ; time and experience will correct them.

'Tis not the hasty product of a day,  
But the well ripened fruit of sage delay.

Upon the whole all these practices, together with some others yet more minute than these, and therefore more tedious in their recital, were of good service to me.

Their direct advantage, their operation upon the objects actually proposed, was by no means insignificant; while their indirect uses, their effect upon the general health and cheerfulness of my mind, were yet more important. No man can be happy without an occupation; a worldly occupation, a business or profession, is not always necessary, though indeed it is a most desirable ally; but the mind, at all events, must be engaged, looking forward to some definite scope, and pressing towards it. This, by common consent, is the one great mode of happiness.

But, as happiness depends mainly upon occupation, so also does intellect upon happiness. One might as well expect a ripe fruitage from winter, as a full intellectual maturity from gloominess of spirit. On the contrary, as often as one is engaged in a good and commendable work, actively and earnestly engaged in it, the very consciousness of our condition, the warmth generated by our activity, is sure to enliven all our faculties, to animate us with a new spirit.

This was the principal achievement of all my exercises. It was not so much the immediate accession of intelligence, though I had this likewise, as the peace of mind that passes all understanding, and in effect promotes it so powerfully. Complacency and cheerfulness are conditions of all intellectual success; everything, little or great, that promotes them, promotes also the light, and warmth, and productive efficacy of the mind.

I grant that this original motive force is more decidedly necessary for the happiness of some men than

for that of others. It has its degrees of advantage. For instance, the working man, the merchant, the lawyer, are occupied more or less each by his respective business. For the time covered by that occupation they have no need of any other impulse to drive on the machine of life, the exigencies of their calling act upon them sufficiently. But no man, not even such men as these, can neglect his mind without suffering grievously for his negligence. To a certain extent, at all events, they are subject to the common law. If we have nothing but our business to fill up our time, we must be tortured with many a long hour of vacancy. It is astonishing, says Johnson, how little of a professional man's time is actually devoted to his profession. Of course this is not a universal rule, but it is very certain that it is a general one; and it is precisely where the experience of idleness is most unfrequent that its presence is felt most painfully. It is custom that makes a hard hand. The transition or depression, as we may well call it, from activity into indolence, the subsidence from sparkling and foaming energy into mere flatness, is the very incubus of the spirit. Bear me witness ye migratory citizens, frequenters of Brighton, Bath, and Ramsgate for fashion's sake, retailers of yourselves and your dull days after the measure of provincial modishness; alas! it were easier for you to grow into your counters, to make a thousand per cent. profit of your business, than to find a market abroad where you may bestow your leisure minutes to advantage.

Besides, it is not every employment that is an occu-

pation: we may have motion *in vacuo*. Many kinds of handicraft, and frequently even the routine of trade, the sessionary hours of the shopkeepers, are despatched without any activity of attention; the spirits, consequently, may sink, the whole faculty may flag, the mind may be in prostration, while the hands are drudging at their work. In such cases, the self-originating force is requisite for satisfaction to the man of business as well as to the gentleman: to this we have a host of witnesses. Many a man has endeavoured to amuse himself by manual employment, by the exercise of some handicraft, and again abandoned it upon trial, feeling that, however it might be urged, still it left the mind open. Cowper, the poet, is one out of a multitude of examples. In the martyrdom of his melancholy he tried all sorts of mechanical pastimes, but was soon weary of them all, and found his only relief in composition.

In truth, the independence of the mind is the only proper independence. A man may be independent, as it is called, in fortune—

Lord of himself, that heritage of woe—

that is, he may walk through his pilgrimage without a staff, and balance himself as he can, or else fall prostrate; living, as it has been well expressed, like a plant without a leading shoot, to dwindle away and perish,—or he may be independent, in the popular sense, by his business or otherwise; but these are only forms of speech. The support that really sustains a man, is his own spirit. That alone can vindicate him

from dependence on aught beside. Without it he is a mere carcass, susceptible of outward impressions, and those alone. The mind is the only monarch : honour it ; do it observance ; render it all its dues of tribute, its custom of allegiance.

It is a great thing to attempt any improvement whatever of one's mind or heart regularly and methodically ; not so much on account of the single object, as because the first success, in all probability, is the parent of many others : we are not satisfied with the first step, we are anxious to pursue the series ; if a single link be of so much worth, what, we ask ourselves, must be the preciousness of the whole chain ? This was exemplified in my own case. An incident befel me which may be worth the trouble of relation, not because there is anything of personal interest in it, for indeed it has none, but as a practical proof to clergymen that a single word, a solitary seed, will occasionally take root even in the laxity of indifference ; and that, therefore, they should persist always, and indulge no faintheartedness. The story is this :—One Sunday, after a long night carried over into the day, and spent throughout in the looseness of sociality, I took a fancy to go to church ; a mere fancy it was—the offspring not of any sense of duty but of self-weariness, and ignorance where else to bestow myself. Such an outset promised but ill, yet it pointed to a most happy end. I went to a renowned preacher, a man who has done in his day the work of a zealous Christian, and improved his talent, not five-fold merely, nor ten-fold, but almost beyond computation ; one who has indeed been the saver of many

souls. For what he has wrought upon me he has my best prayers and gratitude, and the prayer, though not of a righteous man, availeth much, if it be offered *for* such a one in testimony of his righteousness. I will not name him; in truth I need not—the name is in the character.

I took my seat in the church, and sat there a long time dreamingly, without any more significant impression upon my mind than the blank walls could convey to it. I stayed out the time of service, but it meant nothing to me: I had better have been in a sound sleep, so had I been less sinful. The preacher got up into the pulpit, and my faculty of attention, exhausted as it had been by the long drain of the night, served me but for the text, and scarcely survived it. The clear light of truth, the earnestness of the gospel preacher, his force of argument and impressiveness of manner, were all lost upon me; I was fallen into a kind of dose, when, on a sudden, the words, "Examine yourselves, I say, examine yourselves," sounded in my ears with the effect of the last trumpet; I started into attention, but the time was well nigh past, the sermon was at its close. However, as I went homeward, the emphatical injunction, "examine yourself," continued yet to work upon me: at last I surrendered myself to its force. Well then, I said, I will make the experiment. I did so from that day.

Self-examination, the virtue with which I had thus recently become acquainted, has been recommended a thousand times as a main engine of morality; and very justly: we can hardly advance a step without it;

we must be sure of the ground we stand upon before we can go beyond it safely. Security of property, the political economists tell us, and we all know it to be true, is the chief inducement to industry—the prompter of thrift and acquisitiveness. But if we know not what is properly our own, if we have so little interest in it as not even to take the trouble of inquiring about it, how should we go on in our increase, and wax daily? The thing is out of all hope; most men in this respect are very children—children in the dark; they shut their eyes obstinately, and so think to withdraw themselves not merely from imaginary alarm, but from real danger. The dastardly self-deceiving hypocrites!

Disguise, thou art indeed a wickedness  
Wherein the pregnant enemy doth much.

Nine tenths of us all, as regarding our time and talents, are no better than reckless spendthrift profligates; we are afraid to examine our condition, to look into it with considerate eyes—

For therein should we read  
The very bottom and the dregs of hope,—

and so we are fain to go on spending, wasting, and ruining ourselves, “till that grim sergeant Death, so strict in his arrest,” drags us off—alas! not to an abiding home—but to a prison-house, a place of anguish and of torture. Short accounts, they say, make long friends. Without them nobody can stand well with his conscience or with his Maker. It is by subjecting ourselves frequently to review, and in no other way, that

we must attain to any high degree of mental discipline and efficiency. If the eye of the master be not there, order is abroad, and service runs wholly into riot.

Such is the efficacy of the practice in respect of morality; but it was my misfortune to make very little use of this its most blessed purpose. My interest at that time was in matters of intellect, and I gave myself wholly to those things; as to morality and religion, if I did as well as my neighbours, I fancied that I should do well enough. My religious sentiment, as it was the noblest, so, also, it was the last, work of my spiritual creation.

Among my other methods of self-improvement, I renewed my old rhetorical exercises, not publicly nor ambitiously, but for my own private use. Once or twice I attended in the debating room, but I sat there as quietly as if I had been present only on sufferance, and under a strict condition of silence. The fact is, that the bravade of the practised speakers astounded me; their quickness perplexed me; their confidence, by the contrast of my own nervousness, made a child of me—a very infant. Rousseau, who was in truth a miracle of sensitiveness, a creature of nerves, has somewhere expressed his wonder that any reasonable being should be hardy enough to talk at all in society, seeing that the utterance of the simplest sentence involves so many conditions—the knowledge of facts, persons, and all sorts of complicated relations. This is extreme. People in general will wonder not with him but at him. But, as for oratory, it is indeed most marvellous that any human talent and experience should be so



completely victorious, as we see daily that it is, over the difficulties opposed to them. In my case, independently of all general obstacles and apprehensions, I was afraid of myself, frightened at my own shadow, or that of my reputation—a poor thing indeed, and a sickly, but I was myself of no greater force, and therefore I stood in awe of it.

On the whole, my reserve was perhaps prudent, though my reason for it was sufficiently childish. Oratory is of slow growth; it follows the general development of the intellect; one can no more attain it off-hand, by the observance of this and that rule, than a boy can attain the stature and strength of manhood by a month's training: it cometh not with observation—

*Crescit occulto velut arbor ævo.*

In fact, to speak well—I do not say to declaim, but to speak—one must possess, in a high degree, all other intellectual excellences—readiness, self-control, confidence, acuteness, discrimination, and real knowledge; the knowledge, that is, of things in their mutual relations and their relation to principles; not a general cloud of ideas, but facts framed into information. Such a qualification as this is much too high to be common, and therefore it is that we have so few good speakers.

However, I had the comfort of the exercise, though I could not flatter my vanity with the exhibition. When the sun shone not, when the light within me was extinguished and my joyousness sunk in depression, I had nothing to do but to start up from my chair and

speaking upon any stirring subject, and straightway I was a new man; my blood was warmed, my spirits were enlivened, my whole soul was quickened. When the vehemence of my passion was over, still it left its glow behind it, a calm complacency, a gentle glory, an undazzling clearness of the twilight.

I remember a sad case of martyrdom, not indeed to oratory, but to the horrors of insufficiency in it. The example may be useful, pregnant with good instruction; at all events, the impression upon my memory is so strong that I cannot but reproduce it. I had a young friend at Cambridge who was anxious to be a speaker. He kept his own counsel and took none from others, breathing not a syllable of his intention to the moment that he made his essay; careful, probably, lest his lustre, like that of an expected comet, should be dimmed by anticipation—lest he should cast a shadow before him at his coming. Well, his time came, and he got up in the debating room, in all confidence, as he afterwards assured me, and never doubting of his success; fanciful of overwhelming applauses and majorities. But unluckily—alas! no, say rather unhappily—it was his first appearance—apparition would be the phrase, for indeed its effect was most ghostlike: his novelty was marked, expectation was still as death; the silence was a spell upon him; as he rose the view of a vast void opened itself before him, he felt that he had undertaken to fill it to the satisfaction of an earnest assembly; he faltered at the prospect, floundered about awhile, failed at last, and broke down altogether. This is one of the hardest trials

of human vanity ; it was much too hard for his infirmity ; he could not endure himself after his failure ; his thoughts haunted him like fiends ; he fled before them, anxious to hide his head anywhere but in his own home. He was a man of many acquaintances, but hardly a friend among them ; no one who could understand his grief or the manner of it ; none, consequently, to sympathize with him. I was more spiritual than the rest of them, less worldly callous, and so to me he came for refuge. My treatment of him was one of my few courses of practice that have flowed, to the gladdening of my conscience, kindly and Christianly—blessing and being blessed ; leaving behind them an abiding freshness of verdure in the great desert. His necessities were greater than mine, and therefore I preferred them. I cherished him in his affliction, spoke kindly unto him, and treated his poor soul with all tenderness of affection, as a brother with a broken-hearted sister ; proposing walks to him, entertaining him through long evenings, breaking and sifting the mass of his mental coagulation, trying it at all points, discussing it through an infinite variety : still he was moaning and unquiet ; his mind was under arrest, like a man in darkness and difficulty—suspicious that he is ruined, that he must fail, but not daring to confess his suspicion, no, not even to himself ; brooding over it, nevertheless, and raising horrible shapes out of it.

But the aspirant orator is as much under fascination as the gamester ; my friend was not content to acquiesce, he would be a tempter still ; he screwed him-

self up to a repetition, but, alas ! miscarriage, although abortive, is not always barren ; one failure is the parent of another ; poor —— was condemned to be an essayist. His late murdered subject, the dead body of his former perpetration, lay across his way ; he recoiled at the idea of it ; he could not force himself so far as to get over it ; in a word, he failed again and failed utterly. This was beyond his power to bear ; the oppression weighed upon him too heavily, it destroyed his balance ; he fell into a confirmed melancholy, such as a shade or two more of gloom might have darkened into madness. But Providence is over us all, and happily he was chastened in his affliction, perhaps even by it ; he took a religious impression, vindicated himself from his despondency, rose to the region above the clouds, and was superior, thenceforth, to the world and all its vanities. He went out as a clergyman to one of our colonies, and has been resident there since. But I saw him once, while he was on a visit to this country, and then, when I had almost forgotten the facts, I learnt from him the height and depth and breadth of his affliction. Tempered as he then was, he could smile upon it as upon the thought of any other childish suffering, but he assured me that the despitefulness of it had so wrought upon his mind as to drive him to the point of distraction. To be sure, as Mercutio says, the wound was neither so deep as a well nor as wide as a church door—it was but a small sting to all appearance, but it was enough for his misery : it left its venom behind, and thence the mischief.

Thus is the world governed for the most part. It is not the absolute fact, the substance of our grief, but the mere reflection of a shadow—our opinion of the opinions of others as to our condition—that makes us miserable. This is a common curse, but any one who will trust, not, indeed, my assurance, but his own experience of it, will find it to be a very silly one. Idlers, it is true, men who have nothing else to think of, may occasionally turn their memories into so many storehouses of malice—make it their business to deal in detraction, to sell small scandal by the tale; in human society, it is the drones that have the sting and venom; but men of the world, people of use and service, are too full of themselves, too much occupied with their projects, to concern themselves about the foibles of a neighbour. Selfishness in this one case is a safeguard against the lack of charity.

On the whole, then, I did wisely in not entering the lists until I had prepared myself for the contest. Oratory is like chess—a game of entire skill, where one must rely solely on one's resources, and can hope nothing from hazard; or, if there be any hazard in it, it is only, as a Frenchman has said of something else, for those who play well. In this, as in the other arts of display,—poetry, painting, and the rest,—if a man have no especial skill, and be content therefore to keep himself on a level with the multitude, and pretend to no distinction, he does well; but, if he chooses to exhibit himself for his vain glory, and his exhibition fail, there is good reason that he should be ridiculous. Oratory is an excellent thing, but only when it is

brought to excellence, otherwise it is naught; by the old rule of the schoolmen, "*corruptio optimi pessima*;" or, in the terse language of old Terence,

Si quidem Hereli possis, nil melius neque fortius—  
Verum si incipies neque perficies gnaviter,  
Actum est, peristi.

Oratory is the great test of talent, as thought is of intellect. Composition is a sort of middle term—oscillating between the two, and partaking the qualities of each. To this last, as I began now to fancy that I was sufficiently disciplined, I again betook myself. But I had miscalculated my force. I went to work without my instruments, I had not sufficiently strengthened nor whetted my faculties, and therefore all that I could do was to little good purpose. I wrote pedantically. I treated almost every subject with the prosiness and prolixity of a Commissioner's Report, or any other official document; my style was sprawling and awkward, like a great overgrown boy. That was in fact my precise condition. I had overgrown the boyhood of my intellect, and had not yet obtained its manhood. There was nothing in my composition that you could mark especially for censure, there were no salient faults in it; but it had one pervading fault, and that the worst of all—to wit, wearisomeness. It savoured of the academy; it had all the regularity, tameness, and insipidity of a copy after models. It was indeed composition, without a single feature of creation upon the face of it. It had been passed through an alembic, and lost in the process all

its genuine raciness and flavour. Yet it was not altogether without its redeeming points—its elements of excellence. I have several papers of that date still by me, and a short time since I had the curiosity, for there was but little of any other inducement, to look over them. Here and there, scattered over a wide mass, I found some traces of thought, a few gleams of humour, and points even of actual strength; but even these drew their chief lustre from the quality of their foil, the dulness of the general ground where they were so conspicuous; the whole was like Indian jewellery, where, if there be a few gems of price, they may shine forth brightly, but the effect of the whole work is destroyed by the tastelessness of the setting. In short, my composition was laborious; I had a difficulty in bringing my machinery into play. Everything was strained and unnatural; tedious therefore, drawling, and disgusting.

I have spoken long since of my meditative practice, and of its occasion. My courtship was unsuccessful. But I acquired the friendship of my lady love, though not her entire confidence. This was a point gained, for at any time I could make use of the former for the furtherance of the latter; I now tried the experiment. I resumed my broken thread, and endeavoured to piece it out.

I am fond of recounting incidents. If I did not know my age, I might guess myself an old man from the propensity. They may be valueless in themselves, things of no pregnancy, and yet, if they have a marked

character, and so be long remembered, they are as lamps in darkness. 'They may serve us, in the retrospect, to trace back the course whereby we have come ; a single small fact will often supply a link in the chain of evidence, and connect what would otherwise be broken and unaccountable. Therefore I am fond of incidents. Here is one of them—

One winter's evening I was sitting in my room in the luxury of fireside enjoyment ; my tea-tray was on the table, my books spread around it in amiable confusion, sleeping like so many soldiers off their guard ; the curtains were drawn, the very kettle was singing on the hearth, and even the bare walls were mellowed into a glow by the cheerfulness of the blaze. This is the peculiar season of "musing meditation," not indeed "fancy free," but rather full of fancies, and devoted to them. Such was my mood, and I resigned myself to it in willing captivity. I sat watching the births and deaths in the fire, the quick successive generations of that most changeable element ; heads of old men and women, dogs, horses, and other figures innumerable. At last came a gorgeous pile of architecture, growing and framing itself to my view. On it went, increasing in dimensions and heightening in glory, till suddenly came the crash—the whole pile fell in, and reduced itself into a mass of darkening deformity. I started in dismay. In such a mood as that, one is easily impressed ; and the shock, slight as it was, had given a turn to my spirits.—"Why should I waste even a moment upon idle fancies ? Why not rather frame into their due order the images within



my mind, and so lay them up imperishably, as material for my intellect, perhaps even for my greatness." I brooded over the idea, till it began to take a definite form. I determined to realize it, and addressed myself steadily to that object.

I had divers good instruments for the purpose, some recently acquired, and others that I had long possessed; still, in spite of all their service, and they served me well and faithfully, my success for a long time was anything but satisfactory. I was like a paralytic; outwardly I was complete, furnished with manifold good gifts. There was the stature, thews, sinews, bulk, and big assemblage of a man—all but the invisible spirit. I drew from many sources; read, studied, and commented—commented, I mean, in its proper sense, not merely that I made notes and scribbled upon margins; such, for the most part, are but idle comments;—but I followed the writer with my mind; commented not upon him, but with him; went along with his whole course; read, marked, and learned him inwardly. These and other services I did; but the complement was yet wanting—the origi-native energy, and independent activity of thought: these failed me, and, failing these, the entire system beside was available but for half its professed uses, paralytic on one side. I was a collector of learning, much as the members of the Roxburgh Club, many of them at least, are book collectors—for curiosity, and not for service. My objects as I attained them were laid on the shelf straightway. They were like the waxen apples that one has set out as chimney orna-

ments, matters not of nourishment but of ostentation. In short, I was not master of my mind.

Happily, I was conscious of my defect, and set myself to remedy it. The sensitive modest man, as compared with his self-conceited neighbour, is at many disadvantages, and this is the only thing I know that at all compensates them. The coxcomb, however shallow he may be, fancies, nevertheless, that he has depth enough to cover his channel, and so he goes babbling on, never caring to supply his penury from any further resources ; till at last, like the stream in Job, when it waxes warm, then he vanishes. The diffident man, in the mean while, sees and feels his imperfections more painfully perhaps than the very reality would warrant ; but he is thus induced to labour for their rectification all the more earnestly—even as I did on this occasion.

The first fruits of my success are yet laid up in my recollection. There I have consecrated them, and there they are likely to remain,

*Dum memor ipse mei, dum spiritus hos regit artus.*

I had been passing a day at St. Omer, on my way to Paris. To wile away the time, to deliver myself from the tediousness of an inn, I had been playing draughts, drinking coffee, and discussing all sorts of subjects with a young Englishman, intended, I believe, for a physician, who had been educated abroad from his childhood. In the course of our conference, quite gratuitously, and without the smallest provocation on

my part, he began to talk downright infidelity. I accepted his challenge, unadvisedly, for I was unequal to the contest. He had studied the subject, was conversant with the main arguments, had got up a variety of points upon it; and, besides, he was readier with his words than myself, and, probably, with his wits also; on the whole, then, I was no match for him. We were long and deep in the discussion; it was only just as I was to start, that he went away, and left me with my whole mind in a ferment. I endeavoured to work it off. I had the *coupé* of the diligence to myself; the evening was pitch-dark, not an object to distract my attention, and so my soul was left to settle upon her subject.

Between my zeal for my mother church (not the Church of England, but that of Christ) and despite at my discomfiture, I was excited to a pitch of vehemence. As the prophet says, "While I was musing the fire burned within me, then spake I with my tongue"—or, rather, I fancied myself to be speaking. I poured forth my spirit from within me, but spiritually, and not vocally—*cogitationem murmure agitans*, as Quintilian expresses it. I thought an oration; I breathed the thought of it, with all the animated excitement of the orator, but without the thunder of his voice. Neither was this last necessary. What says Elijah?—"There came a strong wind, but the Lord was not in the wind: and after the wind an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake: and after the earthquake a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire: and after the fire a still small voice:" and

therein, it seems, was the Lord. In short, I used the practice in thinking that had before served me so successfully in reading and in talking. I will give you the whole method.

## CHAPTER XIII.

The man who begins to reflect finds himself in a labyrinth, where-into he has been led blindfold.—HOBBS.

I HAVE before mentioned, on the authority of a living writer, that there is no book extant on the art of meditation. This is an extraordinary fact. I would say of it, by way of paraphrase from Lord Bacon, that those who pursue the other sciences and neglect this, the chief and principal of them, are like Penelope's suitors, who deserted their lady, and paid their court to her waiting maids. But in this matter many people are subject to superstition. They have a notion that there is something of mystery, of a deep religious mystery, in the mind or about it; that, in the poet's words, there's a divinity doth hedge it in. If one speaks of it as a materialist, straightway they entertain certain dark indistinct notions of infidelity, or even of atheism, in the speaker. They judge of it as the Philistines did of the ark—if it go of itself, then it is of the Lord; if not, if it require human means to put it in motion, then it is a profane thing, or, as the Scripture expresses it, some chance that has befallen us; whereas, in my humble opinion, it is equally of God, just as all things are beside, whether we have its service immediately from him, or mediately through the use of cer-

tain appliances, and upon the condition of our own industry. But this is the mere folly of superstition, the dreamery of fanatical fools—

*Non ragioniam di lor, ma guarda e passa.*

Upon these points I have no wish to enter into metaphysical discussions. They are not requisite for the subject, and I believe would only tend to cloud it. I need only state my conviction, that, whatever may be the origin of thought, its *process* is merely mechanical. This I believe is plain truth; somewhat shocking, perhaps, to the pride of those senseless people who, on the supposition that the mind—the intellect, in another word—is a mysterious, peculiar spirit, and one properly their own, would fain, against the Apostle's words, be vainglorious of what they received from their Creator, as though they had it not of his gift. However, in the present day, I do not know a single metaphysical writer who does not admit the conclusion, impliedly at least, if not in terms. Indeed, it is only on this assumption that we can argue about our mental faculties at all, or pretend to deal with them. If their processes be material and mechanical, we may be able to control them; if they be spiritual only, then we cannot so much as form an idea of them; for all purposes of argument, they are precisely as if they had never existed. I am aware that it would be impossible—even though we should admit the doctrine of what is called materialism, still it would be impossible—to trace out the process of thought satisfactorily, any more than of sensation. We cannot

always employ, or even describe for the use of others, that "dark lantern of the Spirit," which none can see but those who bear it." Its organs, and, consequently, its operations, are so exquisitely fine, as to elude the most discriminating sense. We cannot, as Turgot says, "*prendre l'esprit sur le fait*," and compel it to an account : it is only by its effects that we can judge it. We have no double reflectiveness, no second mirror whereby we might see it at its work. In thinking we must always proceed in a great measure by the *alogos tribè* of Plato ; the *usus irrationabilis*, as it is called by Quintilian. By-the-by, as I have now occasion, I would fain express my acknowledgements to that author. I am not aware that I am at all beholden to him as a borrower ; but the fund was open to me. In his strictures on the intellect, there is more, in my opinion, of practical wisdom than I have found in any other writer. His eighth book particularly, or his tenth, I cannot exactly say which, is admirable.

We walk then intellectually ; the wisest of us in some degree, and the vulgar wholly, by the way of experience. This with the latter is a "*vaga experientia, et se tantum sequens, mera palpatio*." So Lord Bacon has expressed it, with reference to some other subject than this. But the wise man will endeavour to regulate his experience by judgment. It should be his aim,

Ut varias usus *meditando* extunderet artes  
Paullatim.

or, in the more emphatic words of Lucretius,

*Uetus et impiger simul experientia mentis  
Paullatim docuit pedetentim progredientes.*

There are many different methods of thus regulating and overruling our ordinary habits of thought ; if, indeed, what is vulgarly called thinking deserve to be so called at all. It is with thinking as with cypher-writing, almost every one who practises it has some peculiar practice of his own. Such methods depend for the most part upon mechanical, or, rather, physical processes ; and of these I believe the principal to be respiration. In conversation, in studious reading, and in oratory, I have already stated my conviction that the management of the breath is of very great importance, and I am just as thoroughly persuaded that this is true likewise of meditation—that it governs in a great degree the thinking faculty.

I know very well that a theory like this is open at all points to ridicule. Wherever it may be known, the shafts, in all probability, will stand upon it as thick “as quills upon the fretful porcupine ;” the dealers in sarcasm, the philosophers of the present day, will give it no quarter. For this I am prepared ; only, when the laugh is over, let reason be heard. This is all that I claim ; and, if it be granted, I am right content. Many people are so ignorant of relations as to admit, speculatively, no great consequences, unless they follow from great causes. Truths ere now, and those of the purest quality, have been hidden, principally through this prejudice, from the learned, the worldly wise among men, and revealed to babes and sucklings. They will be so,



equally, in time to come—possibly, this may be one of them.

I would beg, however, to suggest, with all deference, to those stumblers *in limine*, that there is at all events a very close connexion, if nothing more, between the faculties of thought and of respiration; and this their observation will prove to them, if they will only give themselves the trouble to exercise it. For instance, let any man hold his breath and endeavour to think upon any subject—he will find it impossible. He may attend, for attention is passive, but he cannot think actively. The hurry and confusion of mind that one feels on walking into a cold bath is attributable to the same cause. Respiration is checked, and the intellect consequently is abroad—*peregrè est animus sine corpore*.

Neither is the association altogether a thing of my own invention. Far from it; on the contrary, it is wonderful that it should never have been urged into notice, set forward in the point of battle—so obviously do all languages, in some terms or other, point towards it. In Greek, Latin, and Hebrew, and in every modern tongue within my knowledge, soul, spirit, and breath are signified by the same word. This common consent of nations has been regarded as a mighty argument for the truth of natural religion; is it no argument at all for the establishment of any other truth?

I need not enter into the detail. My new thinking method was precisely the same, *mutatis mutandis*, as the one I had before practised for the furtherance of my reading and other faculties. I breathed my

thoughts forth, instead of suffering them to lie in stagnature. My breath was the current wherein they ran. By its action and gentle agitation, it set my whole mental frame in movement. I despatched every sentence in a breath—sentence I mean in its strict literal sense, of an unspoken sentiment—and then *ingeminans ictus*; a second idea having flowed into the interval of vacuity, I applied myself to it in the same way, and so proceeded through the series. This I am confident is no more than what must necessarily be practised by every good thinker and orator, aye, and even reader. They practise it, perhaps, unconsciously; as they are carried along, they pay no attention to the mechanism and action of their vehicle; but they are carried by it nevertheless; it is to that and that alone that they owe their progress.

Before this experiment, as often as I sat down to think, I found it difficult to set myself in motion. I was unable, as diplomatists say, to take the initiative. My mind was like a log upon the water, a ship in a dead calm, lying there idly, her helm and sails useless; unable to make what the boatmen call steerage-way, from the lack of wind to impel her, and give the rudder a purchase upon her. But now I had got a steam-engine at work, working upon me and within me; and by force of its alternate elevation and depression, its expiration and respiration, I could propel the whole body of my mind. At any moment, and in any circumstances, I could point my thoughts as I pleased to a particular direction, and throw them into a particular channel. When my mind was without

form and void, and darkness was upon the deep, then would my spirit move upon the face of the waters, and form an intellectual creation out of chaos.

This, I have no doubt, will be, what the words of the Apostle were among the Greeks, foolishness to the learned. Metaphysicians, and such people, whose "extravagant and erring" speculations have cost them dear, and are therefore prized highly by them, will be abhorrent at simple truth. When they have been digging long and deep and found nothing, they will either feel or feign a most sage and reverend incredulity that anything should have been discovered upon the surface. They execrate a plain easy principle, heart and soul, as the pompous theological prelate execrates the simplicity of the Gospel. They are book-ridden rather than read. However, as far as I am concerned, they may still have their own way,—I do not pretend to interfere with them; I offer them not a confutation of their doctrines but a simple fact, though it is true that the explanation of this fact is by no means equally simple with the exposition of it, the assurance of its existence. What is the precise nature of the connexion between the breath and intellect, the spirit and the soul, I am at a loss to determine; nor can the deepest metaphysician on his part pretend to any surer intelligence as to the nature of many other plain metaphysical agencies. Difficulty, then, is no disproof; but I believe that several good reasons may be given why the fact should be as I have stated it, and I will endeavour to give one of them, that practice may be illustrated by theory, and the sceptic relieved from the

hardship of trusting anything so simple as his own experience.

It is established that we can think only in words; they are our necessary instruments for the purpose. I believe it to be equally clear that we can employ words, in the way of thinking, only by the agency of our breath; my experience assures me that it is so, and that it cannot be otherwise: but this is more than I need assume; it is sufficient to state that as we use words for the purpose of talking, that is, in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred where we use them at all, by expiration, with our breath, it would therefore be difficult, from the known laws of association, to use them for any other purpose, for instance, that of thought, except in that same conjunction; where we are in the common continual habit of using two things together, we can hardly use either separately, even when only one is necessary for the service.

One of our own poets—Gray, I rather think—has given us as examples of extreme vividness, “thoughts that breathe, and words that burn;” I vouch for the accuracy of his phrase. He was right, though in another sense than he intended—wiser than he was aware of. The thoughts that breathe are indeed vivid and powerful thoughts, and they, and they only, can generate the “words that burn, and fan them into a flame.” Sir Poet, I thank you for your authority.

This, then, in my opinion, is the mainspring of meditation, and consequently of composition, since the latter is, or ought to be, merely representative of the former. Many men have blundered on this point in

pretending to give rules for composition as a first term, and original faculty, without saying a word beforehand of meditation. This is most perverse direction ; were we to follow such guides we should indeed go sadly astray—

Hunting all our lives to find  
The knowledge that we've left behind.

It would be just as reasonable for a surgeon to be busying himself about his preparations for a birth, without having first assured himself of the gestation or even of the conception. In my judgment, meditation is the very marrow of the intellect, and, if so, it is time well bestowed to be inquisitive upon it. I shall make no further apology for the length of the ensuing observations.

With novices in thought the first step is generally the chief difficulty ; they are subject, indeed, through their whole course to manifold obstructions, but this is often a positive bar. At its outset, and before it has got well into play, the machine may be stopped absolutely by a very small obstacle. To counteract this *vis inertiae* and add force to the impulse, in short, to give the intellect a fair start, many strange suggestions have been made. One is reminded, in considering them, of the bags of wind taken on board ship by the companions of Ulysses ; the causes in this case as in that seem almost as inadequate to the proposed effect. Some men have endeavoured to stir their faculties by motion and strong exercise, others require absolute rest. Descartes, for instance, affirmed that the watch-

work of his mind never went well but in recumbency. Both may be right. The difference of disposition is a thing greatly to be regarded, just as in crystallization we are told that the solution must sometimes be stirred, and stayed at other times, in order to the effect. Most writers and musical composers even, and painters, have had their own discipline of preparation—their methods of ordering and garnishing the temple for the reception of the spirit. One man would sit listening to music, another would contemplate a fine picture; many have screwed up their energies and dilated the soul to its full stretch by the recitation of poetry; in Quintilian's words, precipitating the free spirit, swelling it into a torrent of forcefulness. These are only a few out of a multitude, units from hundreds of artifices; they may all be good in their own way; doubtless they all will be good if such be our special bias, if nature so gives us the direction.

But after all they are useful only as rudiments; such trickery is below the elevation of the mind, the dignity of the real thinker. It is not the good workman that is wont to quarrel with his tools; adminicular aids and clinging propensities are fit only for the groundling, the child who is unable to walk upright and must be fain to crawl and to creep on as he best may. I believe, in all sincerity, that the "spiritual impulse," the breathing energy commended by me a few pages back, will do every one good service—every one, even the most thought-exercised man: for the rest they are rather importunate than useful, except as leading strings to babies.

Still there is reason in some rules, and we should do well to keep them generally in view—generally, but not pointedly; for it is this pointedness that fixes and transfixes the attention, nailing it, as it were, down, precluding it from its free range, and so spoiling all. In the first place we must be of good cheer, free and easy; wearing our faculties, our mental investiture, loosely, as in an undress; for constraint in matters of intellect is no less than utter condemnation. The cloud will keep out the sun; therefore be *not careful* of what ye should say or think, but let the spirit dictate to you in that hour: the soul must shine forth in cheerfulness, or the intellect will not throw off its cloak; against the spitefulness of ill weather it will only wrap it around the closer. Again, when the thoughts are once in motion, the mind fairly in train, eschew all vehemence of agitation. Reflection is nowhere else but only on the smooth surface. As I quoted it from the Scriptures, it is not in the great wind, nor in the fire, nor in the earthquake, but in the still small voice, that the spirit is made manifest.

By-the-by, how far-reaching, and generally how exact, is the parallel between faith and intellect in their respective courses. Both are born by regeneration, and not according to the flesh; arising into real life by the workings of the inward spirit, and thenceforth repudiating the world and the world's uses, becoming emancipate from the schoolmaster, clear of their weak and beggarly elements, fresh from the service of the law whereunto they were before in bondage. Again, whoever would receive either of them must receive it

as a little child, in the integrity of heart, and innocence of soul, and purity of nature, or it shall be to his confusion. In both the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life : the strictness of the Pharisee shuts the heart up and closes affections as well as faculties at their source ; carefulness, in both alike, precludes all hope of consummation ; confidence is the best test. To pursue the analogy : with each there is a law of the members warring against the law of the mind, and bringing it into captivity. Finally, we see that in neither are many wise men after the flesh, nor many mighty, nor yet many noble men called.

Doubtless there are many points of resemblance that I have omitted, but these are enough to authorize, as it were, the intellect, and to sanctify it by the similarity. Indeed the intellect, in its highest and purest quality, is a kind of faith of the mind ; excellent, not so much because it is conversant with forms, for that it very often is not, but because it is superior to them.

In thinking, as in most other things, patience and perseverance are the chief points of the game, that is, if the elements of thought itself be not entirely wanting. We cannot frame the iron till it be hot, but we may make it hot by striking. Newton, himself, has given us, in a few words, his ordinary process of meditation ; a simple account, but touching and eloquent in its simplicity. It was his wont, he tells us, when he wished to master any subject, to fix his attention quietly but steadily upon it ; gradually the whole would discover itself, light would grow out of darkness,



form out of shapelessness, order out of confusion, till the subject stood confessed before him.

Scindit se nubes et in æthera purgat apertum.

But patience is the only parent of this most amiable production : the process is like that of the sunglass ; it may be that at first there is but a small appearance of hope ; it is long ere the flame takes, but it is preparing to take nevertheless, though the preparation be insensible to our grossness : anon there is a symptom apparent, doubtfully, yet even so—a confession of heat, a clear vapour ; then is the consummation at hand, the flame bursts forth, all is elasticity and energy.

But for this the sun must shine. Meditation must be wooed by us with a winning countenance, otherwise there is no hope. Here, indeed, as Shakspeare tells us, moody dull melancholy is

Kinsman to grim and comfortless despair.

Here we are at the highest point—*cetera inde plana ac proclivia*. When it is come to this the man is in the ecstasy of composition—mental, at all events, and written, if he be pleased to make it so ; though this latter process of clothing their purposes with words, of committing them to paper, is not altogether to the taste of some thinkers. It is with our mental as with our bodily issue, with our thoughts as with our children ; to generate is pleasant, but the offices that ensue, of clothing, furnishing, disciplining, and preparing for the world, are not always equally so.

I need say but little of the very act of composition,

as it is, or ought to be, the consequence of meditation, and altogether subservient to it. The former is the realization of the latter. When our thoughts are floating in the brain, and probably about to die into nothing, to vanish away for ever,

Like the Borealis race,  
That fit ere you can point their place ;  
Or, like the snow falls in the river,  
A moment seen, then lost for ever ;

upon that comes this potent interceder, arrests the sentence of perdition, and substitutes his own record of perpetuity. For these floating thoughts

The pen  
Turns them to shape, and gives to airy nothings  
A local habitation and a name. —

But herein is the danger. The metal should be thoroughly heated, and liquified, and fused, each particle of it, and the whole mass of it, ere we attempt to cast it. We must gather our forces, and array them before we can give the word to march. Whereas, most men are too anxious to be at work, and their work, in its result, (for indeed it falls back upon them like a stone,) is generally but weariness and ineffectiveness. They anticipate the beginning, and so protract, at all events, if they do not utterly preclude, the end. This is a most mischievous delusion ; observe it, guard against it, and by all means avoid it. Wait for the tide ; prepare yourself for the fulness of the deep waters, instead of driving madly on, and running hopelessly

on the shallows. In a word, let your reservoir be brimming, or nearly so, before you open the sluices. Write from a full head. You might as well attempt to scratch your thoughts upon paper without ink, or pour water from an empty pitcher, as to write from vacuity. These, our ideal spirits, must be called from the deep. The writing itch is multiform, but this is one of the worst forms of it—the itch of the fingers for the pen.

There is another precept worthy of all observance by those who would be writers. Lucan shall give it for me; it is better in his words than in my own—

*Successus urgere suos, instare favori  
Numinis.*

We should be forward and not faint-hearted. If we go but a step or two towards our purpose, we might as well never have set out,—better indeed, as we should so escape frustration; whereas most striplings in writer-ship, as often as they are in company with their fancy, are satisfied with slight favours, content with a kiss, not reflecting that therein is no generative virtue, nor promise of any issue. As Lord Bacon tells us, we should use our learning not merely as a friend for conversation, nor as a mistress for wantonness, but as a wife for comfort, service, and procreation. The man who does otherwise, who dallies with a single idea and then dismisses it, is about as wise as the foolish boy who sowed a bean and would be for ever plucking it up to see how it was growing, whereas it was nothing in itself, but only the root of the future plant. A

single bright thought, when we have struck it out, may be the parent of much light ; it may serve us as a lantern in our paths, a torch to guide us : but, if we stand still, whereunto is its guidance ? Therefore we should follow up our game, taking nothing as done while anything is left undone. And at first we should be content with the first flowings ; we should not press upon the subject too harshly nor too long, lest we bring the flavour of the wood into the wine. Let the liquor, the genuine expressure of the grape, stand by awhile with its impurities ; it will be soon enough in some after-time to cleanse and rectify it ; of this, when the season is come, it will need much, and the richer the field, the more work for weeders. It has been said truly that the elaboration of the writer is much like that of the sculptor—it is not by adding, but by taking away that his work is perfected. The device of each may be the same,

*Minuis dum formas.*

There is another capital rule. Give yourself a free course ; let your impulse carry you out ; go to your object in your own way ; account it the most mischievous of vanities to be perpetually looking out for quotations and allegories, golden apples of temptation,—foreign, and, therefore, improper thoughts to press into your service. Depend on it, while you step in the track of others, you will make no good speed, nor walk to any good purpose.

The exercise of composition to those who are masters of it is the highest of all human enjoyment, save

that of the devotee, and perhaps, also, that of the impassioned and successful orator, while he is carrying his audience along with him. Composition, whether written or mental, acts upon the whole frame, pervades it universally, runs through every nerve and fibre, and quickens to a warm glow the entire being, not only during its practice, but long after it. When Horace and many other writers declare that under its influence they are endowed with wings to fly, that they spurn the ground beneath their feet, they speak, as far as sentiment is concerned, practically rather than poetically. The spirit is then stirred at its very source to a radiant, and gladsome, and sparkling energy. I am persuaded that thoughtful people have here a very great advantage, if they would only use it properly, over their unthinking neighbours. In the latter their inner, their inmost nature is absolutely dead, or at best as torpid as death itself. The nerves that are subservient to thought, and stimulated by it, are never in such people so much as called into action; but there they exist still, and as nothing exists in vain, and everything is intended to have its use, we may conclude, from all analogy, that the uses of those nerves can never be neglected or remitted with impunity; but this is a wide subject, and one as deep as it is wide. I leave it to the consideration of *physicians*, in the largest sense of the word.

It is true, that with many men who have attempted it—with all, in fact, up to a certain point of proficiency—composition is sheer labour, and that of a very irk-

some kind. As it is said in Scripture of the prophetic spirit, it is like as a fire, or like a hammer that breaks the rock to pieces; but it is so only to the inexpert, from default of true principles and of the right method. The labour of the skilful is light; while that of the fool, as the Proverbs tell us, wearieth every one of them. It is thus in all crafts; experience is ease—that is, if it be real, and not merely seeming experience. When we reach it we are on an inclined plane, motion propagates itself; we go along almost without an effort, and quite unconscious of it.

I tried my new acquisition, my spiritual method of thought, over and over again, for hours together, on my way from St. Omer, till I had persuaded myself of its sufficiency. The greater part of the night I beguiled by it; I renewed it the next day; and thus, on the whole, I made the most delightful journey of my life on the dreariest, dulllest road travelled by man—that between Calais and Paris. When I got there, when I found myself in the “mistress city,” I did as probably no Englishman ever did before me. On my former visit I had demeaned myself as one stung by the very gad-fly of excitement—infected from hand to foot with the itch of novelty. I had lived in the whirl, and could hardly bear my life out of it, for, when that was over, then came the sense of sickness, the depression of the spirits, the heaving of the stomach, the sickening of the soul in calm, the absolute self-weariness. But now I was another man, and altogether of another mind. Like Hamlet, give me but my imaginations, and I could live in a nutshell, and

count myself a king of infinite space. All that I wanted was the shade of quiet—

Segregation  
From open haunts and popularity.

This it was not difficult to find, even in such a place as Paris. Day after day, as soon as I had despatched my breakfast, I used to betake myself to the Tuileries, and there, in one of the side groves, at a point as little frequented, or nearly so, as if it had been sacred to the Dryads, I took my accustomed seat, and resigned myself to my meditation. I was as much taken with it as a lover with his new mistress, or a young lady with the idea of her first lover. There would I sit, as very a hermit as ever dwelt within a desert, exhausting subject after subject; or no, not that—every subject is inexhaustible, as each extends itself to all the rest—but seeming to exhaust them; and at last, as the lengthening shadows admonished me, home again, in lightness of heart and joyousness of spirit, as one fresh from the conversation of fairies. This, with scarcely an exception, was the happiest era of my life. I know not when else I have enjoyed, in so short a period, so many hours of pure, clear, unqualified pleasure. I have continued the practice since—the especial practice, I mean; I try it from time to time, and it has never yet failed me, except occasionally from my own prior default.

Before I dismiss this subject, I will offer a few considerations that may serve in some degree to explain it; not indeed philosophically, but popularly; not from

its depths, but at its surface. The first requisite for thought, as most of us know, is energy of attention—an energy not violent, but gentle, and yet prevalent. Now, how is this to be attained? Our habitual experience tells us, our instinct prompts us, to take a lesson from physical analogies. We know that when any strong effort is required—as from the sailor at the capstan, or from the porter to raise his burden—we naturally draw our breath strongly, as a preparation for it. So for any act of desperation or extraordinary energy—to mount a breach, for instance—what says Shakspeare?

Hold hard the breath, and bind up every spirit  
To his full height.

As if the former were a necessary condition of the latter; and so I believe it is; the breath is the life of the body and of bodily exertion, and no less so of the intellect.

To hold the breath hard, then, is a requisite of attention, and one instinctively employed by us; but to attend is not to think, any more than to make a lunge and rest upon it is to fence. For this there must be action and re-action; the spirits must come and go. The tide makes its advances by the alternate progression and recession of its individual waves; the fire is raised to its full height by the contraction and dilatation of the bellows.

For a week or two I practised my new talent in retirement; afterwards I felt the spur of ambition, and became anxious for an occasion of display. In order



to this I began to frequent a *café* on one of the Boulevards, where, as I understood, men of letters and politicians were wont to have their resort. Thither I used to go, enter the room, look around me, and wherever I might chance to see any two or three men earnest in discussion, if their manners and countenances promised anything intellectual, I would take a paper, lounge quietly up, and plant myself beside them; the debate could hardly be too long for me if it were but tolerably well sustained. And yet I took no part with them, though my forbearance was against my original intention; I was the *auditor tantum*—a mere listener and commentator. The fact is, I had not the excitable spirit, the *mobility*, to use their own term, of our French neighbours. The quality belongs to their temperament; it may be acquired by exercise, but much is necessary for it: I could not, like them, wind myself up to a debating pitch at a moment's notice. By-the-by, I know not whether I have done it before, but here, at all events, I should wish to expose a vulgar and very inveterate fallacy, almost a universal one. It is reported of Demosthenes that he declared action, or, as we understand the word, gesticulation, to be far and far the most important requisite for an orator. If ever he said any such thing he must have been a fool at that moment, whatever else he might have been for the remainder of his life. But this I was well assured could not be so; the foolishness of the phrase, together with the authority of it, puzzled me in the extreme, and so I took the trouble to inquire into it. The Greek word is *kinesis*—signifying agitation, motion, anything

of a stirring quality. Here, then, is the truth: it was not action, but emotion, that Demosthenes held to be necessary, and in this all orators will agree with him; a man must be possessed with his subject or he can never work with it upon his audience.

But I have no reason to regret the time that I spent in this said *café*, although I was no better than a listener there—a listener, and, as I said before, a commentator also; this was the main thing, I was conversant with men and manners; I saw them in their open moods, and under their truth-telling influences; I watched them in their triumphs, vexations, and disappointments, and I reflected on everything before me where I could only find matter for my reflection—points to receive my aim. On the whole, it was a good school; I frequented it much, and there it was that I was schooled into no small share of my worldly wisdom.

One poor fellow I knew there, and knew well—a scholar from Grenoble; poor indeed, forlorn, and friendless, with nothing but a college reputation to assist him; unpractised in the world, shabby in dress, vulgar in figure, but wearing a countenance with a soul in it. We were brought together by a mutual bias, and, studentlike, as often as we met were sure within five minutes' time to be far in argument, whetting each other's wits continually. In general his spirit was that of melancholy; dark of itself, but vivid, flashing, and foaming to the highest pitch of impassionment when once thoroughly excited: he was deep in politics, and sure, with such a temperament, to be at one or other

of the extremes. An accident determined him. He had received a slight from some nobleman with whom he lived at the time as tutor ; or, at all events, his fancy was full of some such inflammatory matter, and he became, principally I suspect from that motive, a furious Republican ; a very monster, breathing fire and sulphur at every word ; so much so that I could never encounter him while in his mood, and was forced far back towards Royalism, as one generally is by the wrath of such fell opposites. Poor fellow ! the last time that I was in Paris I missed him from his accustomed seat, and could hear nothing of him then, nor ever since, although anxious in my inquiries. Haply he is no more ; his was a boiling spirit, and in these hot times all too likely to boil over. It may be, that, with other such ardent souls, his zeal betrayed him into danger—danger unto death ; and so nothing else remains of him but the record in my memory. That shall last.

## CHAPTER XIV.

I make conjecture that they of this country are cannibals, for I noted that they had among them certain colleges, whereof the companions were nourished up in all laziness, doing nought, but growing to huge obesity, even as they fat bullocks for the slaughter in our own country.—KLIMM'S VOYAGE BY HOLBERG.

WHEN I left Paris I returned to my wallowing in the mire; in other words, I went to live in college, and was *resident* there—oh, how true is the phrase!—for some six or seven months. This, one would imagine, should have been a ripening time for me, the very summer days of my intellect: materials were abundant; motives, resources, and objects in all variety; libraries, leisure, the society of learned men, immunity from household cares and the anxieties of this world, all these advantages were within my reach, but I used them to little purpose, and should have neglected them altogether if I had chosen to follow the example of my “co-mates and fellows.” It was said by James the First, that, if he were not a king, he would fain be a fellow of a college: I am rather curious to know where he got his idea of the blessedness of that condition; certainly it was not from the knowledge of the truth, nor from observation of the thing itself; even in the matter of study I believe that very few of his Majesty’s subjects are so little addicted to it as these same fellows. A man who has bestowed

half his life in mastering the classics or mathematics, shuts himself up very commonly in his strong hold; he is unwilling to venture forth from it and prove himself in the open field, where he is conscious of his weakness. He has got together a heap of symbols—mere counters—and with these he calculate smost dotingly; but the substance of these shadows, the sterling gold of the intellect, coin current through the realm, he is as far as ever from acquiring: all his wealth is in paper—paper, like bad scrip, marked with a high nominal amount, but of no value either in use or in exchange, repudiated in real traffic. He cannot condescend to become a child, and learn rudiments; he meddles not with matters wherein men of a very ordinary rate have twenty times his strength, without a tithe of his reputation.

The truth is, that it is not by means of facilities but through difficulties that the mind must grow up to greatness; we may saunter all our lives along the dead rich level of an open country or library, and never, in either case, see or know any more than the ground immediately around us, or the book actually in hand; we should toil, and toil upwards, really exerting ourselves, if we would get to a commanding height. In the intellect, as in the body, it is not mere food that can strengthen us, unless exercise co-operate with it; hence the importance of a profession to men of letters. Walter Scott tells us that his fancy took its best flights after a day spent in plodding law studies. Your professed literary man, if he be nothing else, is generally a poor creature, nerveless, feeble, and ineffective: fami-

liarity is disregard: he lives among his objects till he is callous against all impressions from them. The dweller among shows and spectacles is the last person in the world to make a point of going to see them: the owner of a picturesque domain is indifferent to its beauties: the fellow of a college, the *possessor*, though not the master, of all means and appliances for learning, will seldom take the trouble to stretch out his hand for their attainment. He is a mere trustee; the legal owner, indeed, but not the beneficial one. It was so with most of us absolutely, and with myself in some degree: it was like the sight of an election dinner, the plenty of it turned my stomach—*inopem me copia fecit*.

I passed the greater part of the winter in college, and the whole ensuing spring: I promised myself fine things—books, sciences, and conquests multifarious; but on the whole, at my time's end, I was in the condition of the man in Horace—

*Sic queret quid agam, dic multa et pulchra minantem  
Vivere nec recte nec suaviter.*

It is only the strong mind that can live in idleness—in apparent idleness, I mean—independently of regular external impulses and attractions; that can stand without support. As for me, I found myself in the very castle of indolence; there was a fascination in the atmosphere; an enervating lethargic spirit, that kept my soul abed, idly sluggardizing: awake and in a fine glorious morning, with an expanse of great scenery in view, but yet unwilling to stir, and withal comfortless

and restless in its abeyance. However, as the spring wore out, the temperature of my mind began gradually, with the season, to wax warm ; I panted for enlargement ; it was not that I would live for the world ; as yet I had no such nobleness of ambition, but I was anxious, at all events, to live in it ; to see something more of men, if only that I might be enabled to deal the better with books—to separate the chaff of them from the grain by the shrewd stirring winnow of experience. I neither wanted nor waited for any better reason ; upon this I took up my staff and set off again as a wayfarer.

I went into Devonshire. It is a glorious country, and the glory of it infused itself into my spirit ; the embers were stirred, and the fire within me again fully kindled. Moreover, apart from the effect of scenery and communings with nature, I had now many advantages that were witholden from me in my former journeys : I had the command of my mind ; I knew the touch of its main-spring, and could start it at any moment. This was a vast resource ; only the practice was not so habitual to me, nor the energy of my will so decisive as to insure me the full effect of my instruments : so much I had to learn, and it was long ere I had perfected my lesson.

I went alone, and had no book with me but a Bible. In the first place, I presumed that my own thoughts, with the aspect of a fresh country and the incidents of a wayfarer, would occupy me sufficiently, and in this I had scarcely overrated myself ; but I had also a still higher motive.

For a long time I had been in a state of indifference as to religion—blind, stupidly rather than wilfully, in the stupid blindness of inadvertence. It may be that I had my turns and returns of religious feeling. The spirit of the Gospel was glorified to me in its humility, and charity, and simplicity; I had glowed, and softened, and wept repeatedly under its influences. But then I had been given to understand that it was not these things, but rather certain speculative doctrines, that constituted Christianity; that it was better in frame than in hand, according to the phrase of the picture-dealers; that its essence was in its making up, its quality in its forms and doctrines, and therein I was as reckless as the good old Roman, Gallio, himself. I cared for none of those things; and, therefore, as the substance was never offered to me, neither would I have the husk. I rejected it not irreverently, but unregardingly. Besides, custom had made me callous. The notion of the heads of colleges, and of our great public schools, seems to be much like that of Pharaoh: “Ye are idle, ye are idle; therefore would ye do service to the Lord;” only that he considered such service as the pretext, and they as the employment, of idleness. Our striplings are sent to chapel that they may be out of the way of mischief: as if there could be any greater mischief than the stagnature, and consequent corruption, of the thoughts; any greater impiety than to shuffle together the principles of good and evil; to carry the spirit of profaneness into sacred things, and not the spirit of sacredness into profane things; the last it is impossible to



ensure, but we can cut off many occasions, and this among them, from the former.

I happened one day, in an idle humour, to read a sermon of Barrow, and was impressed deeply by it—to the depth of meditation. I pondered, searched, and considered it for many days together; of course not wholly, but at intervals. Well, I thought at last, I have tried many things in my time, and religion, too, shall have its trial; it is blessedness to a multitude, and why not to me also?

But I felt that hitherto it had no chance with me; my mind was overgrown and overrun with all sorts of plants, weeds, and flowers, save only with the herb grace. It could hardly show itself at all, and, if at all, only to be stifled and choked up. This I set myself to remedy—and how? I knew that in the way of vice those are perfect in it who give themselves wholly to it, and I wished to see whether, by the same means, I might not make the same advances in the walk of virtue. To this end I abandoned all my other books, forswore my custom of reading, withdrew myself far away to secret haunts from all means and occasions of it, took only my Bible with me, and to that dedicated myself wholly.

I am astonished at this moment, how, as I was then framed, I could have brought myself to resolve so wisely. The wisdom of the head and the devotion of the heart, if both had been perfect in me, could yet have counselled me no better. It was a flash of lightning out of the cloud, sudden, and but for a moment, yet it showed me the path before me as clearly as in broad

day ; and as I devised it well and piously, so also did I execute it faithfully : anywhere and everywhere, on the bank, by the roadside, under the deep woodland shade, by the retirement of the secret stream, and on the craggy heights of Dartmoor—the Bible, the Bible, and still the Bible ; that and nothing but that. This was my one subsistence—my manna in the desert. I fed upon it spiritually and heartily, I waxed upon the food in grace, and in all godliness of growth.

In the course of my expedition, I passed through a place called Hatherley. I am not quite sure of the name, but it was a village, or small market-town, a good deal north of Tavistock. I reached it on a Sunday evening in summer—a season to every Christian soul, in the country particularly, full of feeling. At the town's end I observed a crowd gathered together, and, on going up to them, found that they were standing round a preacher, who was addressing them from a mound on the road side ;—a man evidently of humble station, poor, tattered, and fervently religious—one who would certainly be called, and possibly might be, a fanatic. He preached to them for some time, rudely, indeed, and somewhat wildly, but with the utmost earnestness of emphasis and gesticulation ; when suddenly some wretched fellows began to make a stir, interrupted him repeatedly, and at last were so heartless as to throw stones at him. Their brutality wrought at once upon his sensitiveness ; the poor man was struck down by it in a moment : he said not a word of expostulation, but descended, seemingly in alarm, passed through the midst of them, and went

his way quietly. I was moved to take his place ; an impulse that I could not control overruled me so to do. I got upon the mound, abandoned myself to my course of spirit, and with a fulness and flow of language such as I had never before known, I set forth to them the flagrancy of their injustice, and horrible heinousness of their sin ; insisting upon many topics—the treatment of our Saviour by the Jews, with a variety of others likely to be suggested by the circumstances. My words were not without effect upon them ; the suddenness of my apparition struck them, and my fervency strengthened the impression. I left them under its influence, and went on my own path, rejoicing inwardly, as one conscious of a good, and great, and truly Christian act. And, indeed, it was no less ; I had given proof of a manliness above my years, a spirit of true Christian fortitude. I had shown myself superior to ridicule, trampled it under foot, and crushed it into the very dust. I had felt the force of virtuous energy, and found that it was all-sufficient. The effect survived the effort. It was not merely a momentary glow, but an abiding colour—nor a colour merely, but a deep penetrating dye. I retain it to this moment.

In other respects, also, my journey was of great benefit to me. I had lived so many months in College that I had begun to conform myself in spirit to that most ungenial quality of existence. Everything was provided for me. A set of delightful rooms, sumptuous dinners, prospects, and pleasure grounds, such as many noblemen might envy—all these appurtenances

of luxury I might call my own; and they were my own in every other sense, save only the truest and the happiest one—that of domestic ownership and interest. Oh for the dinner of herbs where love is! How often did I sigh for it, amidst the hateful luxuries of our table—the *opes irritamenta malorum*—garnished, as they were, with envy, malice, and all uncharitableness. One lives there, for the most part, only for one's self, and to one's self, and in one's self. Companionship is not friendship. The affections perish for want of exercise. We were never called upon to consult, as in a domestic family, the convenience of others; to forego our own comforts; to feel the blessedness of mutual concessions: from the disuse we lost the faculty; the centripetal power prevailed, we sunk into ourselves: in short, we were all selfishness. Heaven grant, if I should ever again be brought to such a condition, that I may become a stone at once, rather than a stone-hard, a blockish man.

But at last I broke the silken fetters wherewith, like the poor worm, I had been enveloping myself, to the preclusion of all sympathy. I went out among my fellow-men to a far country, and a most delicious one. I studied as much as possible to forget myself; to enter into the interests of others; to make myself, as far as might be, a partner in their hopes, and fears, and affections. It is only by thus mixing one's self with the feelings of other men that one can have a chance of foregoing one's egotism, of getting far enough from our proper selves, to take a full view and make a just estimate of our own character. Accordingly,

whomsoever I might meet, great or small, parson, farmer, or labourer, I made a point of talking with them, and that freely and familiarly. I repudiated my College, and became a member of the great human university—a citizen of the world ; and so was my spirit warmed, my faculties quickened, and all my soul expanded. Besides, there was the communion of nature. I used to walk early and late, and rest myself, like the other universalist, Pan, during the heat of the midday. Consequently, I hardly ever missed the sunset and sunrise, and never once did I contemplate them without emotion, at the thought that I was a portion of the great nature, an emanation of the universal spirit. Contemplations like these, together with my readings and meditations of the Bible, wrought powerfully upon my disposition. Impressions, forceful in themselves, and repeated often, must needs sink deep into the soul. I returned a new man. The flashiness and glancingness of my spirit had been softened into an even tone, subdued into solemnity.

This excursion was a crisis in my life ; a new principle originated from it, and thence a new developement. Before I entered upon the journey, I was indeed a stripling in mind, but yet one of no contemptible resources ; I was master of much learning, and of divers good intellectual methods. I was familiar with the ancient languages, and had an acquaintance not merely superficial with such modern ones as are commonly studied in this country. I knew something of several sciences, enough for general views and analogies—enough also to talk and argue upon them

without absurdity. Moreover, by the favour of a good memory, I had all sorts of facts at my command—historical, statistical, and social; and this is of no small advantage for the enjoyment of society. I had withal (to pass from the acquisitions of the mind to the mind itself) a certain energy of will, in no very high degree, but sufficient to ensure my proficiency in any walk of discipline. I was ardent and enthusiastic, with an intuitive perception and judgment of whatever was beautiful and poetical, as well as a most exquisite delight in everything of the kind. Lately, to all these good gifts I had added the power of controlling my thoughts, of speeding and exercising them at will by the management of certain physical faculties, and one especially—that of the breath. Upon this, all men will be sceptical, most absolutely incredulous; and yet I am well assured that, with any one who will try the method fairly, it will be as successful as with myself. Not that I wish here to assert that there is anything in common, anything essential at least, between the breath and the mind of man. I have no occasion to prove so much:

What needs the bridge be wider than the flood?

All that I do assert is this, that the breath is a moving power, acting upon the intellect, probably through the nervous system, as the blast and vapour act on the steam-engine; though, in fact, they have nothing in common with its mechanism, or its peculiar powers. It is by the exercise of the breath that the machinery of the mind is set in motion; that the course of our

ideas is directed ; that energy is kept up, inertness impelled, and listlessness dissipated. I have many hints and half perceptions on the subject—a chaos awaiting its creation. It is a rich vein in psychology, and one I am confident that might be worked to prodigious advantage. However, such as it is, I leave it to those who have more leisure than myself to employ their learning upon it.

Here was a good store of materials, and, more than that, the outline of a good design ; but, withal, it was grievously imperfect—a thing, as it then stood, of insignificance. I wanted much for its perfection, but what I wanted principally was a pervading and prevailing principle, whereby the whole fabric of my mind might hold together, and work together ; instead of standing as it was now, disjointed and out of sorts, feeble, concertless, and ineffective.

Within a few months of my return from Devonshire, I was at a friend's house in the country. It was a large, irregular, and somewhat curious old place, delightful for a dreamer and saunterer ; a late owner of it had been a book-collector, and a suite of several rooms had been given up to the library. There I established my head quarters. I could have lounged about in it for ever, reading, noting, and imagining ; such was my usual practice when I was at large among books, but here I did something better. The last volume that I took down was "Law's Serious Call." I had looked into it before ; it had been highly recommended to me, but, in spite of all authority and truth, and my own Christian profession, I hated it at first

sight—the author as well as the book—with a satanic sinfulness of hatred. The fact is, that in those times my notions of religion had seldom gone any deeper than the outward decencies of life ; as for vital Christianity, I had no concern with it, nor any wish to entertain it. I was abhorrent at the very idea of it ; as much so as one would naturally be at the idea of cutting one's self to the quick with the knife that one uses merely for paring one's nails, and bringing them to evenness and order. But of late another spirit had come over me. My acquaintance with the Bible, my long and entire diet upon it, had corrected my evil humours, and altered me most powerfully. Upon this change, I took up the " Serious Call " and read it earnestly. Never was a book so energetic. I seemed to have become a pure spirit, and to be conversing with such another—so clear, so immediate, so forceful was the truth that shone upon me. Every word spoke to me as an oracle from God. I took the volume out of the room, and strayed with it into some meadows belonging to the house, covered with old oaks, and unconscious of the sun. There I threw myself in the shade, forgot all things else, and made a long meal of righteousness.

When I recovered from the surprise of the revelation, for such it really was, I felt astonished that it should never before have been revealed to me. The Romanists were wont to disguise the living spirit of Christ in a dead language ; to mumble their words out, not for edification but for superstition only ; and this was imputed to them for unrighteousness—per-



haps justly—but, alas! the language of our own liturgy is almost equally dead, and must always remain so, until it be animated by the living spirit of its preachers, the vital example of its ministers. This is the profligacy of our church. It is true that every Sunday in the year, and in almost every parish throughout England, a man gets up into a reading-desk, and reads some portions of the Gospel, and afterwards exalts himself into the pulpit, that he may preach his own doctrine from his own pride of place, leaving the blessed Bible beneath him; moreover, this same sermon that he preaches may haply, as it often is, be as evangelical, in ostentation at least, as the very Gospel itself: but who is to believe him? When a mountebank at a fair tells us that such a stuff is poison, and, at the word, drinks a bottle of it off—or, that this is the elixir of life, while he is known to have kept it close up from year to year, and never to have drunk a drop of it,—who is so foolish as to believe his promises against the faith of his own practice?—*Quære peregrinum*. And so with our ministers of the Gospel. If there be blasphemy in the designation, as I fear there may be, Heaven forgive me for it! They tell us to love our neighbour as ourselves; to practise entire humility, and charity, and self-denial; to abjure the world and all its vanities; pressing forward for the crown of righteousness, and looking to that only. And they warn us rightly. Suppose Christianity to be true, and all such doctrine, together with all such books as “*Law’s Serious Call*,” must be true likewise. No reasonable believer

can doubt it. For every word of it we have the express warrant of the Gospel. But words cost little; it is only while it is worn that the shoe pinches us. And now look to the example of these successors of our Saviour in the ministry. Is there one in a hundred of them who really takes up the cross and abjures the world, who makes himself a home-missionary, who does sacrifice to his faith, who denies himself comforts that he may the better administer to the necessities of his poor brethren, who dines without meat that his neighbour may have bread and starve not? Is there one such in a hundred? I say it confidently, no: hardly in a thousand.

And what is the consequence? Why, simply this: unthinking people, those who cannot or will not examine for themselves, and who, if they have any religion at all, must take it wholly upon trust, can have no trust in such ministers, can see no trustworthiness in them. They say, and very naturally, "Here is a man who tells us so and so, and does quite otherwise,

Shows us the steep and thorny way to heaven,  
And recks not his own read.

He preaches self-denial and contempt of riches, and yet we see him every day lolling in his carriage, living like any other gentleman, and bringing up his family in the very practices condemned by him, *verbo tenus*, as most pestilently dangerous. It is his business to know the truth, he has nothing else to do; doubtless, in a matter of such moment, he has informed himself thoroughly upon it. It is clear then that, as

long as he is in the pulpit, he is acting a solemn farce, upholding a piece of ceremonial pageantry. However, let us do for our sakes just as he does for his own. We cannot get far into danger if we only follow, for our religion, a man so learned in its doctrine, and so prudent in all his other concerns."

I know that it has been said, and repeated a thousand times, that clergymen are not bound to be better than any other kind of men; that we are all under the same obligation—amenable to the same standard of righteousness. Undoubtedly, it is the duty of every one of us to go as far forward as he can towards perfection. But there are degrees of glory. We have the sun, moon, and stars. We must improve each his talents, but we can improve only those bestowed upon us. It is only where much has been given that much will be required of us.

Now I say that the clergyman is in this predicament; much is given to him—a treasure of many talents. He is educated for his office, appropriated as a holy and a chosen vessel for the service of the Lord; he declares upon his ordination that he believes himself to be moved by the Spirit to undertake the ministry; he is removed from worldly traffic, from the solicitation of daily gain, that pestilence of the soul that walketh openly at noonday; so much the less is his temptation, and the greater his guilt if he swerve at all from innocence. The business of one man is this thing, and of another that; the utterance of holy doctrine, and the example of a holy life, is the business of the clergyman. His occupation is

as high above all others, as the heaven is above the earth; so likewise should be his regard for it, his devotion unto it. But I do not insist upon so much: I am content to waive the difference. All that I require from the clergyman is merely this, that he should be as much superior in the exercise of his profession to other men, as those other men are to him, each in his particular craft—tailors, shoemakers, or mechanics; and this they must be, if they would make their livelihood of their calling. Surely it is not unfair to expect as much devotion, and, consequently, as much proficiency, in the exercise of things spiritual, as in that of things temporal. The clergyman, at all events, should be the last to gainsay the expectation, to refuse the proof of his apprenticeship. They have offered their services voluntarily; let them only fulfil their offer; else it shall be their disgrace, and, I believe truly, their damnation.

And yet you still tell me, Clericus, that no higher measure of holiness can be required of the clergyman than of any indifferent man—that he is under no special calling to be righteous. Say you so, indeed, Clericus? Well, it may be that you are right. But surely you will not say that he is under no special obligation to preach the Gospel, and insist upon the duties enjoined by it, however he may stand obliged to execute them? “No, I admit that—he must be a teacher and a preacher at all events.” Allow me then to ask, How is it possible that a man should preach zealously, and fervently, and effectually, unless he believe the Gospel that he preaches; and not only believes it, but does

it? Shall he insist upon his own damnation? Shall he himself set the standard high, when he knows that he cannot escape hell-torments, unless actually, and in truth, it be set most miserably low? Shall he be able to embrace the truth freely, fully, and fervently, with all the fetters of his sinfulness bound fast around him? No, surely. But still he must preach the word. Then, as he is called specially to do this, he is likewise called specially to do what is necessary to this; in a word, to practise what he preaches; for example in life, as well as in grammar, is the soul of instruction. Preaching prevails not. For all good purposes, man is imitative rather than auscultative;

For, in such business,  
Action is eloquence, and the eyes of the ignorant  
More learned than their ears.

But it is otherwise ordered in our establishment. I looked again and again, and through the main body of the church I could observe no other spirit at work than that of mere worldliness—a sanctified idolatry of Mammon. In nineteen cases out of twenty, the *persona ecclesiæ* was indeed a mere mask, and worn carelessly and slovenly; a mask of duplicity—a *parson imparsonnée*. Certainly, in this respect, our clergymen are nowise ambitious: they cleave unto the very dust; they are unconscious of anything so wild as the aspiration after angelic sublimities; they follow the steps of the apostles at a most reverential distance; they have no wish, not they, to trench upon the attributes of the saints. On the contrary, like good fathers of a

family, they leave the best of things, the things spiritual and heavenly, to their children in the church; and content themselves, good, pious souls! to feed upon garbage, to stay their appetites with the offals of this world. And their prudence is at least equal to their piety; for a proof of it, we have only to mark their practice on a single other point. They read the Scriptures every Sunday, and know so much of them as to be aware that the way unto salvation is strait; why then should we straiten it still more, aye, and perhaps encumber it altogether, by our competition? better leave the course clear and the race open for such as are without surplices, and so much the readier to run it. Again, they are well persuaded that to teach by example is mere childishness; that learning made easy is only another name for idleness; and therefore they instruct their disciples much in the fashion of the mathematicians, proposing to them the practice of Christianity as a problem, and leaving them to work it out by themselves; or, at most, just pointing the direction, and forbearing to lead them on along it, lest they should lose the merit of their attainments. The church, as they well know, is built upon a rock, and, on that assurance, they repose and pass their lives in it most slumberously. To speak plainly, they make a milch cow of their religion, and, to be sure, they fatten on its milk most gloriously.

I saw that there was no chance for Christianity till such grievances as these were remedied. As long as the eye is dark, the whole body must be in darkness. If the master be no better than his disciple, how shall we hope

for any advancement? As the Spaniards say, "The devil hides himself behind the cross, and thence he must first be driven." The church is in a state of lethargic plethora bordering upon apoplexy. We may remedy it either by letting blood\* or by dieting it more sparingly. I prefer the latter of these methods—the subtraction of the fuel—to the lading out of the boiling water. The church must first be humbled, that so, finally, it may be exalted, and that from a sure base. But this, though easily said, is indeed very hardly done. Of all people in the world, your parsons are the worst patients. The very lawyers, those hacks of worldliness, as a clergyman would call them, are, in comparison, miracles of magnanimity in the hour of trial and of privation. Within these last few years, the pleaders and sessions' practitioners have been divorced from the better half of their income by acts of legislature. A man who could have supported his family a dozen years back, has now much ado to provide for his house-rent from the profits of his profession; yet they are content to suffer in silence: the *gemitus columbæ* is the only expression of their agony. They see that it is for the public good, or, at all events, by the public will, and therefore their private loss is endured by them uncomplainingly. So with the other professions—with government places, military and naval offices—how many of them either abolished or abridged. But patience and resignation are not to be found among the features of clerical Christianity.

\*. In other words, by throwing the superfluity of its veins into other channels.

Talk but of touching the tithes, or reducing a bishop's income to that of ten general officers, and, immediately, sacrilege is abroad! hell is let loose upon the earth! it is all over with Christianity! And, after all, what is this mighty matter? Let us take them at their own estimate: a parson, when he is dealing with his brother, presumes that he is liberal enough if he requite his services with a stipend of some £80 or £90. Why should they fare better from strangers? *Quid faciant hostes audent cum talia fratres?* These are hard words that the parsons give us; but happily, in our times, they have neither stake nor firebrand to back them. Superstition is not the order of the day. The old witch may swear her heart out, and get nothing for her pains but the laughter of the very populace. If the cries of the monks and friars had carried it, we should have known nothing of the Reformation. Nor shall we know anything of Christianity, if we suffer its voice to be overpowered by the bellowing of these fat bulls of Bashan, these furnaces of the flame of priestcraft.

They have been wiser elsewhere than with us. On the continent, with a very few exceptions, the church has been stripped of its pageantry, reduced to simplicity, curtailed of its train and its lawn sleeves, and so enabled to do its work as an efficient handmaid of the Lord. There, if one goes into a village and inquires for the clergyman, one finds him to be a man of poverty and humble piety, working often with his own hands, as did the chief of the apostles, during the intervals of his function; a man who can insist on self-



denial, and has no need to blush at his own rejection of it; preaching the pure, evident Gospel, instead of perplexing his readers and amusing himself with all kinds of subtleties, unprofitable for all else, save only for his private advancement; after the fashion of those worldly-minded divines—divines, nay, rather diviners, pretenders to knowledge, jugglers and players on the word—who, for their own vainglory, will be unravelling the text of Scripture, and taking single lines and sentences, that they may make them into snares for the unwary, for those who are zealous of the truth, and would fain press forward to it more earnestly than befits the interest—of their pastors, shall I say? no—of their trafficking, and calculating, and canny drovers. The fact is, that the earliness of our Reformation has ruined us. It was forced fruit, and, therefore, as somebody has said of the Russians, it became rotten ere it was ripe. The people were not prepared for it. They were dazzled by an imperfect light, a light just shining out of darkness. They had been the slaves of priestcraft too long to dare anything so noble as to vindicate Christ, and the Gospel, and themselves, into full liberty. The process of the wine was forced on before the fermentation had gone far enough; hence the vapidness, and flatness, and deadness of our quality. Look only to Belgium, and Holland, and France, to Switzerland and Germany, where full intelligence and experience prepared the plan of their Reformation. Look, and see, and admire the difference.

But this is the affair of the people, and not mine

individually. For my part, I want nothing but the Gospel, I lack no service of the parson. He has never yet come to visit me, as he should have done, for his duty's sake, and I care not to go to him. It is only from habit and association, and for example's sake, that I am a church attendant. I could do better for myself at home in privacy and with my books. On the whole, then, the greater the general abuse, the greater also is my especial blessing, in that I am exempted from it. Yet cannot I forbear, but that I must lift my voice up for the Gospel and for the nation. Woe upon the actors of such iniquity ! woe upon its abettors ! woe, lastly, upon its sufferers !

## CHAPTER XV.

What a piece of work is a man ! How noble in reason ! how infinite in faculties !—HAMLET.

FOR myself, my whole mind, my entire moral being, was altered by these my meditations. From this time I became a lover of the Gospel, a humble searcher after truth, a thirster for the pure sources. The light of the Bible had illumined me, and by it I saw the utter insignificance of all worldly things. This consciousness improved my intellect in a most wonderful degree. Before, I had been weak and vacillating, blown about with every wind, incapable of any strong fixedness of purpose, whereas now I became wholly independent, and self-sufficient. I rose above the natural man, and immeasurably above the worldly man. My judgment was free. Thenceforward I looked into the very essences of things. The follies of fashion and opinion, the sarcasms of the small mind, the sneers of the puny worldling, I regarded no more than I should have done the mouthings of an ape, or the mockings of an idiot. I had obtained the one thing needful for my confirmation in faith and intellect. I threw myself on my great resource, the sense of an overruling Providence, and I needed nothing more to carry me over all my difficulties. I acted, as it were, in the confidence of the Almighty, the confidence of faith, the

genuine *pistis*, the love that casteth out fear. By-the-by, it has often occurred to me that this Greek word *pistis* should be rendered trust, and not faith, generally, if not universally, through the New Testament ; and so of its derivatives, each according to its kind. I have a notion that the change would be a powerful one, the substitute better than the original ; that it would put to flight a whole legion of miscreate and air-drawn phantoms, if once adopted into our service. But I must leave the inquiry to theologists. I have neither means nor leisure to prosecute it.

Here was a new developement, and one not so much of change as of regeneration ; it was the key-stone to the arch, the crown of the whole fabric, whereby, to use the language of St. Paul, it was framed together, and fixed together, and strengthened in its unity through the love of Christ : this was the one thing needful to me. My spirit naturally, or, at all events, very early, had been highly sensitive and shrinking ; this quality had lived with me, and grown with me, and seemed likely to die with me, although it had been much modified and occasionally overruled by the various modes of discipline set forth by me heretofore ; but these modes consisted, for the most part, of acts rather than of habits, and, even when they had grown into habits, those habits themselves depended for their exercise upon my energy and animal spirits, and, as often as these resources failed, they could not but fail likewise. Hitherto I had only cisterns of water, broken cisterns ; they might serve me for a time, but nothing could serve me fully, and constantly, and cer-

tainly, but the living fountain alone. The regulator must be steady, and independent, and sovereign, as compared with the things regulated, else is it a vain show; such a power I had long wanted and now found it.

I have read somewhere in Rousseau a description of the change that came over him after a year's residence in Paris. His scorn of human pusillanimity, his indignation at the viciousness, and treachery, and meanness that encountered him at every turn, wrought him to such a pitch of spirit that he surpassed his own consciousness, and could hardly believe in his identity. I was affected in the same way, although under very different auspices. My perusal of "Law's Serious Call," my conviction of its truths, my rumination and gradual assimilation of them, had endowed me with a force and energy hitherto altogether foreign to me; I was conscious of my elevation, I felt as one raised above his wont to the very height of heaven. The virtue thus vouchsafed to me acted with a wondrously tonic power through every nerve of my system; it quickened, animated, and invigorated me; I felt penetrated with forcefulness and elasticity. At last I learned the meaning of the poet; I felt fully and thoroughly what it was

To strengthen man with his own mind;

a feeling that I had known before only partially and imperfectly.

From this time I began to walk, and think, and act as in the presence and under the protection of the Almighty. I felt that entire confidence, so nobly de-

scribed by Bacon as given to the dog by the presence of his master, and to man by that of his Maker. I withdrew, from time to time, to a safe distance from the crowd; I took my vantage ground upon a height, and thence I could make a just estimate of the things beneath me. I corrected my earthly charts by heavenly observations;\* and as I raised myself upward, this earth, with all its objects and concerns, sunk to a mere speck of insignificance: I regarded the things of the world, the exigencies of my daily life, as things to be provided indeed, to be sought out and used, but no way to be admired or coveted: I was filled with the spirit of indifference, and thence of independence; I became indeed regenerate: the feeling of the Divinity had expelled the feeling of the natural man and supplied its place. But the great effect of this change, in regard of my relations with other men, was the superiority to opinion resulting from it. I cared no more for the shrugs and sneers of fashion, the expostulations of mere custom, than for the grimaces of a harlequin; instead of shrinking from the sting of the nettle, I grasped it at once boldly, and crushed it into dissolution: satire and sarcasm wrought upon me as the stings of a musquito upon steel—

They might jest

Till their own scorn returned to them unnoted.

I went my way, passing through the midst of them evenly, calmly, and confidingly. I regarded no man's person; authority was like an old fable to me; I had hardened my face as a flint, and my brow as a brow of

\* Coleridge.

adamant; I looked to essences rather than forms, substances rather than shadows; I was admitted to an inner view; I had become an esoteric disciple of the truth.

I am aware that this self-assumed superiority to opinion may be, and often is, a thing of danger; dangerous in its crudeness and fermentation, although in its perfection most blessed. For myself, I felt many times that, when any great principle was at stake, nothing would have been too much for my effrontery; I could have used the pen and sword, aye, or even the dagger, indifferently; but that was not the fault of the spirit, but rather of the crudeness and perversity of the nature wherein it wrought; in itself the faculty is most excellent. This, and this only—the superiority to opinion, the prevalence over vulgar notions—constitutes true greatness; greatness is grandeur, and grandeur is superior height.

Here, then, was the end of my intellectual trials and wanderings; I was anchored in a safe harbour; my latest experiment served me once for all, and superseded the need of others. To be permanent, to dwell as an abiding guest, is the prerogative of religion when it is once truly and thoroughly admitted. I found the proof of it: I had tried many other methods of intellectual discipline, and most of them had been useful for a time; aye, and more than that, they had been often lasting in their effects, even when in their operations, from my own unsteadiness of method, they were precarious and irregular; still, however long I might have employed them, they could never have given to

my intellect its full developement; they were like especial gymnastic exercises, calculated some to strengthen the arms, others the wrist, others to open the chest, but powerless to renew and to reframe the general constitution, the entire fabric of the body: They were makeshifts, of a vicarious and substitutionary quality, like the efforts of a blind man to supply the default of sight by the preternatural acuteness of his touch or hearing. In the words of Hudibras, to

Set up community of senses,  
And chop and change intelligences.

Much may be done in this way, but much more must always remain undone. The use of such aids, without religion, is like the use of artificial heat and light to the exclusion of their great natural fountain; it may serve our purposes for a while, and in particular circumstances, but it is liable to crosses and disturbances, and all kinds of failure. The sun above us, the sure, perennial, inexhaustible source, is our only safety; that sun is religion, the great imparter to the soul of warmth, and light, and efficacy. It may be obscured for a while; at intervals, clouds and darkness may overshadow it; it is liable, as regarded in its effects, to the change of temperature and seasons, but it is fixed in the firmament; its influence, wherever it extends, even although unobserved, is yet always in operation; there it is, the perpetual and unfailing source of health, and strength, and gladness. Take the testimony of Cicero: *Omnia profecto animus cum se a cælestibus rebus referet ad terrestres excelsius magnificien-*



*tiusque et dicat et sentiat.* I know it well, it is not for this cause, principally, or such as this, that religion is to be commended ; thus to praise her, is to give her but a very scant proportion of her praise ; she has higher merits by far, more angelic attributes. Her primary and peculiar office is not to strengthen the intellect, but to purify and elevate the soul, to open the eyes of those who were blind to Gospel truths, to soothe the contrite heart, to loose out of their captivity the poor sufferers heretofore in bondage to fleshly ills and infirmities. This is the proper orbit of religion, the path wherein she moves, but yet not the limit of her influence : that influence, "that radiance and collateral light," she may shed, and does shed far beyond her peculiar range ; and, besides, her especial functions have had each of them a host of expounders ; theirs is the harvest, and, as for me, I put not my sickle into their field ; I am writing on the intellect ; and for the intellect's sake I do most heartily commend the use and exercise of religion, feeling that, even here, its efficacy is great, although in a comparatively small thing.

Here, then, it is to the mere intellectualist that I address myself. He may fancy that he is independent of religion, that he wants nothing of its aids, comforts, or assurances ; that he has a sufficient reserve within himself as well for his advancement in his calling as for his amusement and health of mind ; and true it is that he has, in the cultivation of his intellect, a great source of satisfaction ; true also he may do something in this way without even a thought of religion ; he may

do much if he be a man of high energies and talents; but, if he can do much without it, gracious heavens! what will he not do with it?

Religion is the only thing that contains within itself both the stimulating and soothing quality; that quickens us to energy, and then recreates us with repose. Hence it seems made, as it were, for the residence, and, more than that, for the very atmosphere of the immortal soul, supplying what is exhausted, and repairing what is worn and wasted in it.

Unhappily, very many men are fond of intellectual pursuits, and, withal, either downright infidels or careless about religion. In such cases, it is useless to insist on duty; they deny the principle, and of course would repudiate our deductions from it; but it is yet open to us to appeal to their prejudices and predilections, and possibly with good effect; to show them, if they choose not the better part, that of loving religion for its own sake, that they would do wisely nevertheless to study and to cultivate it for the sake of the advantages that it offers for the attainment of their own objects. Its primary use is inestimable; if they are regardless of that, its secondary one is the thing next in value, although at an immeasurable distance. Strange that there should be men found, and learned men too, to vaunt with the irreligious poet the *edita doctrinâ sapientum templa serena*, as strongholds and vantage grounds whence to look down complacently on the errors and vexations of mankind; and that those same men, in the prosecution of that same purpose, should withhold themselves from the church of God—the

*templum in modum arcis*—the blessed heights of religion. It is certain that the success of our intellectual exertions depends not so much upon our laboriousness, or our opportunities, or our capacity, as upon the spirit of our enterprise—the cheerfulness, and clearness, and elevation of mind wherewith that enterprise is taken. Now this quality may be imparted, it is true, from elsewhere, but then only fitfully and partially: it is from religion alone that it can come lastingly and in perfection; in this latter there is a balancing power as well as an impelling one; we move straightly and steadily under its direction, and so it must be a strange thing if we fail to advance rapidly. We may say of it, and much more truly, what has been said of metaphysics by an eminent foreign writer, *Tali denique splendore animum afficit, ut sibi ipse præluceat ad nanciscendum primi opificis similitudinem.*

I had found myself a fixed point, a *primum stabile*. I had learned, in the expressive phrase of the French, *m'orienter*. As often as I was at a loss, puzzled, perplexed, or harassed in my daily pilgrimage through life, I had only to turn myself to the east, to the point of the blessed sun's rise, and thenceforward all was clearness and simplicity to me; my doubts and difficulties would vanish as though they had never existed; I had begun to put my trust in my Maker, and I was sure that I should never be confounded.

But here I would ask a moment's leave on my own personal account. Let no one imagine that I am assuming credit for myself as a thoroughly religious

man: far from it; my principles, I am sorry to say, have showed themselves but too little in practice. I can see the truth, and acknowledge it, and honour it, and condemn what is contrary to it, but never yet have I had the courage to labour as I should do to attain it. I am poor and beggarly with all my opportunities to acquire the true riches; I am utterly unable to profess that I have abjured the world and embraced the cross of Christ; therefore I am no true Christian. As far as outward appearances go, there is, perhaps, little to choose between my fellows—mere worldlings—and myself: 'I have lived, and continue to live, much like other men of my own means and station; some sacrifices I may have made, but none of magnitude. I have denied myself divers trimmings and garnishing superfluities, that I might the better minister to the necessities of those who needed what I could spare; but the morality of any thinking heathen would have prompted him to as much. It is not, then, from any merits of my own, from the recommendation of my Christian charity, that I can hope for my acceptance. So much for outward acts and observances of righteousness. I have failed in them sadly, fallen most lamentably short of the just measure; and in this my outward conduct has been nothing more than the exponent of my inward spirit; my religion has been occasional only, and my carelessness general. I have neglected to keep my lamp burning;' to feed and maintain the flame whence, and whence only, the soul of man can be strengthened, and tempered, and refined to the fineness of pure silver. I have regarded the light of

Christianity as one may regard a fixed star—admiringly, but not feelingly. I have not been zealous, above all things, to prepare and sanctify my soul as a temple of the Lord.

Hence the occasional outbreaks of my temper, fits and bursts of violence ; a violence once habitual to me, and not even yet overruled by me to absolute subjection. But to leave all such mischiefs on one side, as foreign to my present matter ; it is certain that my neglect to cultivate and improve to the utmost my religious faculty has been as pernicious to my intellect as to my morality. As often as I have suffered an intermission of such exercises, and foregone my custom of meditation, my spirit, after a while, has become like lead within my bosom, and sunk into abasement ; I have felt, as it were, of the earth, earthy. Then the host of Lilliputians, the follies and fashions of the world, have fixed me in my supineness to the soil, and so subjugated me utterly ; I have fallen away from my high calling, and become a creature of doubt, and restlessness and confusion ; I have lost my individual soul ; anxiety, and feebleness, and nervousness have taken place with me of energy and independence.

Nevertheless, my religious feeling, with all its uncertainties and deficiencies, was the best friend by far that my intellect ever had ; it was a regulator, a standing force, working, not actively, but constantly, so as to prevent me either from falling off into utter lapsedness, or flying away into all kinds of irregularities. This was a great service. If the ship have but a helm, there is no need to keep it perpetually at

work ; a turn or two now and then will be sufficient to hold it in its course and give it its due direction. It makes much towards fortitude to possess the consciousness of an unfailing resource, a sure refuge in time of need, although we may resort to it but rarely. The rich man, though he should make but little use of his riches, is at least delivered by his knowledge of them from a most painful dread—the dread of poverty.

It has occurred to me lately, and I dare say to hundreds before me, that religion, where it is genuine, is not so much a matter of practice, of occasional incidental practice, as of regular prevailing habit ; otherwise, if we hold to observances and mere points of duty, we shall only act religion instead of doing it. Indeed, I had within me much of this prevailing tone, this religious sentiment, though it showed itself but little upon the surface. It has been said by a great writer that the religion of a true Christian will declare itself throughout his whole moral constitution, in every thought and deed, just as in certain worms and caterpillars the purity and innocency of their diet is attested by their simple greenness. Certainly, I was never so transcoloured, nor did I ever even approach such a condition ; but there are degrees in all things ; one may attain a high point, although it be far short of the summit. My religious feeling operated upon me as an alterative, gradually, slowly, and almost insensibly ; however, it wrought a change upon my constitution, and by it I was changed. I was as much above what I had been, the mere professing worldly Christian, as this latter is above the avowed infidel. It is a great

thing, the greatest thing of all, for moral and intellectual advancement to feel the force of a true principle. This every body must do ere he can attain to elevation; and the force of this principle, the efficacy and virtue of religion, as I had before acknowledged, so I began now to feel it. I regarded it as a mariner may regard the north star, not constantly nor fixedly, for often I was careless of it, and considered it not at all; but in the hour of doubt, and danger, and perplexity; then, indeed, I knew its value; I looked to its saving light; I shaped my course by it, and was fully confident in its guidance. I should have done much more. I should have made it my friend and familiar in time of ease, as well as my refuge in dismay; I should have embraced, and loved, and cherished it as the very soul of happiness: had I done thus, I should have been as much superior to my present self as I am now superior to my former self—to the darkness of my first condition. But time was, and is no more. What I had made myself, even that I now am. Alas! how shall I answer for the manifold faultiness of my self-formation?

I would say then, reader—and this corollary of my whole work, this final lesson, I bring you from my own experience—if you would be great in intellect, give yourself to these things; if you would acquire an elevation, and clearness, and comprehensiveness of mind; if you would be superior to fortune, and rise above worldly strifes and miseries, above malice, hatred, envy, and all selfishness and uncharitableness; if you would disentangle yourself from those most

perplexing toils, and walk in independence and self-sufficiency; if you would do all these or any of them—and, mark me, you must be poor indeed in intellect without them—then I say to you again, cultivate religion. You may take no care of it, and yet exercise yourself, by the use of other faculties, to cleverness and even to talent, but of this be sure, that single influence failing you, a high intellect can never be your endowment. By such means you may quicken and improve the mind, but you can never elevate the soul, for as truly as the soul is the life of the body, so is religion the life of the soul; all things else, however we may regard them as indispensable, are comparatively worthless, and this one thing, worthless as it is considered in the world, is alone indispensable. With it we begin in security and end in success; for the confidence that is in the Lord knows no failure nor disappointment. It were idle to commend it any further; its trial is its only worthy commendation. It was said by one of the old heathen poets, “Let us begin from God.” We have adopted but too many of their vanities; it were well for us if we would at least take to our hearts this one wise and holy counsel: let us then do so, else shall we be less Christians than the heathen.

And thus have I brought my history to its close. You see me in my image impressed faithfully upon these pages: I have set forth the whole course of my intellect from first to last, running it through “even from my boyish days,” and copying from my memory, as they occurred to me, its quick vicissitudes, its changes between light and darkness, between despair



and hope, between triumph and disappointment; in short, I have recounted the series of my experiments—true, genuine experiments made upon myself—a lesson worthy of all acceptance, and study, and observance; for assure thyself, reader, in intellectual as in natural philosophy, it is only by the practice of experiments that we can hope to be effectual: we must try ourselves at all points before we can know our faculties, or put them to their use, or give them their right direction. And now I have to cast up my account, to set my hire against my labour, my profit against my loss, and ascertain the balance. How, then, does it stand? This is the main point, and it should be developed clearly.

In the first place, when all is told, I am neither rich, nor powerful, nor renowned among my fellow men. My intellectual advancement, whatever it may be, has either fallen short of these things or left them on one side: if they be the greatest good, the true riches, then am I poor indeed, and doubtless I should be so regarded in the opinion of many men. "We judge the tree by its fruit," so probably they will tell me; and it is in vain that on this tree of yours we look for such fruit as is beautiful to the worldly eye or pleasing to the worldly palate. Your philosophy may be well enough for your idle dreamers until they wake from their dreaminess to disappointment; but for us, what we have proved we will hold fast; we know better things, we will none of your false ware—away with it.

However, for myself, I must confess, though it is

yet an early day for me to complain, that I have missed, hitherto, these great objects of ambition. But how, and why? Assuredly not in consequence of my intellectual exertions; it is not from them that my failure has originated,—forefend the thought!—on the contrary, my only chance of success depends on them. I am convinced that Voltaire is right, where he tells us that the spirit of business is the same with the true spirit of literature. The perfection of each is in the union of energy and thoughtfulness, of the active and contemplative essence; an union commended by Lord Bacon as the concentrated excellence of our nature. And of this truth I have had experience. By the course of practice and experiment heretofore recounted by me, I had advanced myself from mere passive childishness of intellect to something like the maturity of manhood. I had vindicated myself from my base and most irksome subjugation to feebleness, nervousness, and the whole host of mental infirmities; and I had attained, in their stead, a certain degree, not a very high one I admit, of clearness, comprehensiveness, and confidence—energy, industry, and perseverance. Now, it is quite certain that these qualities can be no hinderance to the worldly advancement of any man; on the contrary, they conduce to it necessarily, and most manifestly. Generally, even in these brisk and giddy-paced times, these dogdays of competitionary heat, they will command success; but they cannot do so always. Moreover, as I must admit the truth, even when she is a messenger of evil, therefore I allow the fact, that the cultivation of the intellect in

its true and proper method, from the very uprightness and highmindedness that it gives, is apt on some occasions to throw difficulties in our way, or, rather, to prevent our evasion of them. Where the entrance to preferment is low, and the whole passage crooked, there the worldling has the advantage; he is then at home; he can creep and crawl along where he cannot walk uprightly; while the man of high intellect will stoop to no such degradation. Hence he may miss his points; as they say in the language of the turf, he is liable to be shut out and precluded from laying himself out fairly in the race. But this, after all, is but the sufferance of a moment; and as surely as he bears it here, so will he be rewarded for it hereafter; and, besides, it is in itself but a small matter, compared with the great and many advantages for worldly furtherance that belong in other respects to intellectual eminence.

But it is a miserable mistake, though by no means an unfrequent one, to suppose that the value of the intellect consists mainly or principally in its sufficiency for our worldly furtherance. The man who can come to such a conclusion is in much the same degree of baseness and absurdity as those who were followers of our Saviour only for the sake of the loaves and fishes. We value intelligence high, not because it may lead us to such things, as indeed it often does, but because it raises us above them. He who has the fewest wants is the nearest to the gods; so it was said by a philosopher, and there is much truth in the saying. To be free from imaginary cravings is in itself a great for-

tune; greater than the greatest wealth of the greatest leviathans in riches can enable them to reach. Not that I am one of those who regard the advantages of this world as things absolutely of no account. Good houses, and good clothes, and a good diet, and good possessions generally, are welcome, for the most part, even to the most rational man. I would not detract from them; let them pass for their full value: only thus much would I say, that the only effect upon our welfare, of these and all other external things, is by their impressions upon the mind. But impressions from without, as I have already stated, never fail to be dulled and deadened by repetition. We become gradually indifferent to them; at last we regard them but little, if at all: the place that they should supply is become a mere blank to us. But our intellectual habits, on the contrary, are strengthened by exercise; they become quicker, more vivid, and more agreeable from day to day; even where they do nothing more, they fill the void of our existence, and that most pleasingly. Besides, as the mind is the man, we must address ourselves to the mind, if we would procure the man's enjoyment; we must frame it to energy, and quickness, and sensibility, else is the heart like lead, a cold, heavy, inert, impassible mass. A person of loose, and feeble, and listless disposition will be feeble and listless still, though he be surrounded with pleasurable resources. They will merely tantalize him; he cannot make them available; he has not strength enough to extract from them the virtue, the efficacy towards happiness, that really belongs to them. He

can do nothing with great means ; whereas the man of intelligence, quick, lively, and full of spirit, can make much of very little means, turn all things to account, find everywhere a soul of gladness, "and good in everything." Moreover, the wealth of this world labours to the end of happiness by a very cumbersome and unwieldy apparatus ; whereas the intellect acts immediately, goes straight to its mark, and hardly ever fails of it.

Thus am I requited. This is the service that my mind, with all the pains that I have bestowed upon it, has rendered me ; and, verily, the reward is not such as to attract the worldly eye, or kindle the lust of covetousness. There is nothing of show or glitter in it ; nothing of pomp or circumstance—it is sterling, but simple gold. In the world's esteem I am not a jot the wealthier for its possession ; except, indeed, so far as it has saved me from wastefulness and profligacy. Neither by its means have I arrived, nor am I ever likely to arrive, at greatness. It speaks not in the trumpet-blast of fame, but in the still voice of consciousness. Nor yet am I altogether sure that my mind, as I have framed it, will ensure me what *is called* success in life, for this depends not on one's self ; occasion may be wanting to it, competition may keep it out, accident may frustrate it.

But, though it has given me none of these things, it has done me a far better service, inasmuch as it has enabled me to forego them, and to live contentedly without them. It can never assure me the favours of Fortune, but it has made me independent of her. By

its aid I can find my happiness in myself, instead of looking for it anxiously, and hurriedly, and vainly, in things without me. This is my reward; and, on the whole, comparing what I have gained with what I have undergone, I am well satisfied with it—satisfied to the very fullness of gratitude.

I do not mean to say that the habitual exercise of the intellect ends necessarily in this result; but, at least, it tends to it necessarily: and, when combined with religious feeling, it cannot fail to work on others as it did on me; to ensure them, that is, a firm and steady footing throughout their walk of life, to render them superior to casualties, and to endow them with the strength and self-sufficiency of the man described by Horace:

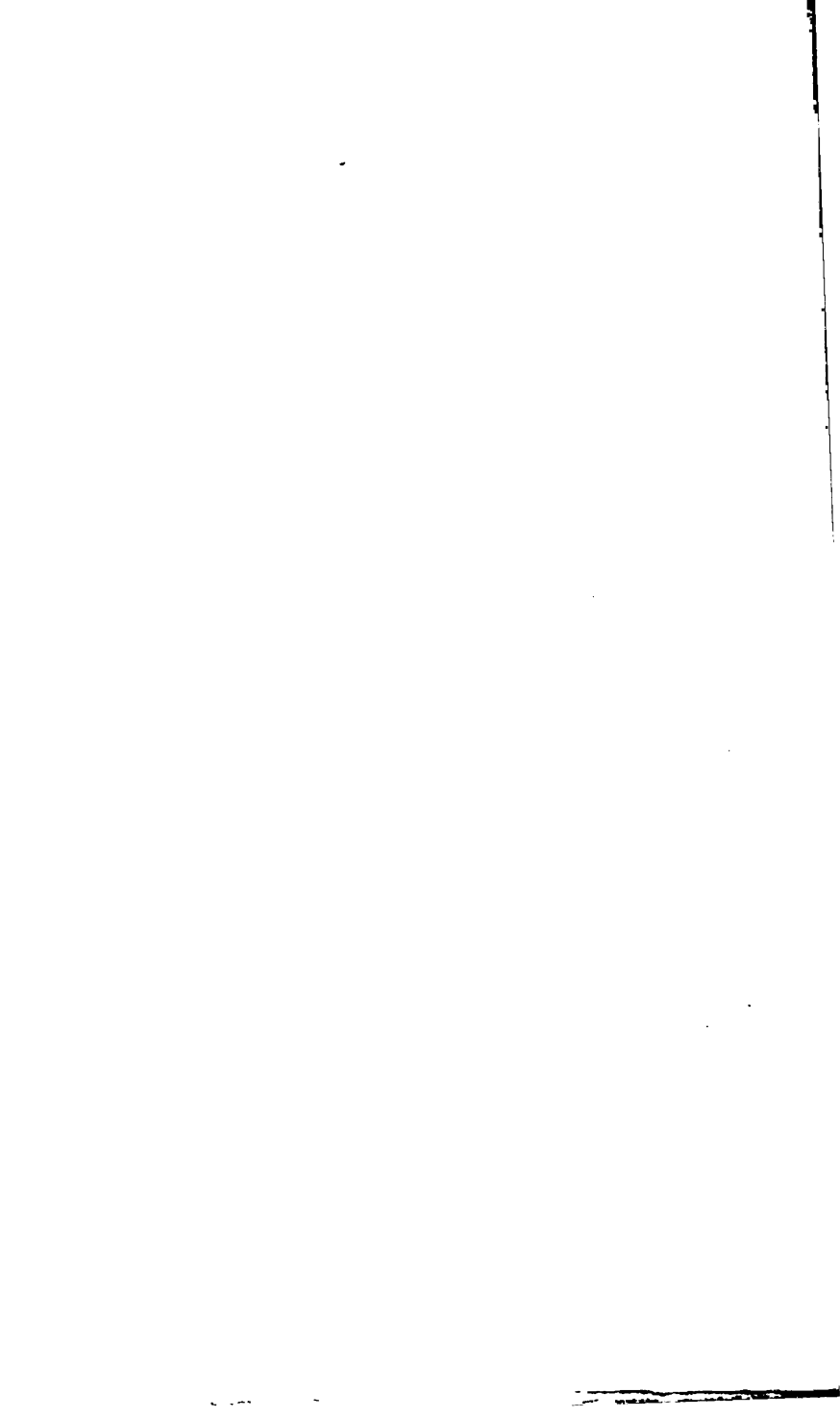
*In se totus, teres atque rotundus,  
In quem manca ruit semper Fortuna.*

These are great endowments, glorious gifts; but there is one above them all, and, indeed, beyond all price, that may be considered as belonging, not exclusively, but properly, to intellectual superiority. This is the developement of religion. For there is much of mutual dependence between the mind and soul: they lend aid, each to the other, and conspire amicably. I believe that a certain degree of intellectual force is absolutely necessary for the existence of true religion. It is only by thought that we can arrive at reason. Reason alone, calm, reflective reason, is equal to the subjugation of the passions; and the passions must first be subjugated ere religion can prove itself. I

have stated this truth elsewhere ; in an earlier part of my book I have dwelt upon it more at large. I offer it again here, not to insist upon it any further, but in order that the impression of this religious advantage may be the last upon my reader's mind.

Truly, then, did Solomon say unto us, "Wisdom is the principal thing ; therefore get wisdom ; and, with all thy getting, get understanding. Exalt her, and she shall promote thee : she shall bring thee to honour, when thou dost embrace her. Forsake her not, and she shall preserve thee : love her, and she shall keep thee." Such is his injunction, and I will not weaken it by any addition of my own. This only will I say, that the prize so set forth by him is open to every man ; and he who refuses it, who turns away from his happiness, when it is offered him on so fair terms, is guiltier, in my judgment, than the suicide. To point out the way of its attainment, to prove it by my experience, is the object of this book. There may be other and better methods. It is very likely that mine is not the best, or surest, or most philosophical one ; but it is sufficient for all those who will only attend to it earnestly, and to such do I commend it.

Here, then, my work is at its close ; and may the blessing of Heaven rest upon it, not for my sake, but for that of many. May they use it, and prove it, and find their profit in it. Their success will be my own. I care not for any other reward than the consciousness thus to have contributed to the sum of human happiness.





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The principal feature of 'The Pictorial Bible' is defined by its Title. It is to make the *Objects* described or referred to in the Holy Scriptures familiar to the eye of the general Reader. At the present time a 'Picture-Bible' (*Bilder Bibel*) is publishing in Germany with remarkable success. The present work, however, differs considerably in its plan from that and other illustrated Bibles. The immense treasures of Art which the great Painters have bequeathed to us on Sacred Subjects will be here opened to all, as far as they are capable of being diffused through the medium of wood-engraving; the Landscape Scenes will be represented with that fidelity which we are now enabled to realize through the labours of recent Travelers; and the other objects, whether of Natural History, of Costume, or of Antiquities, will be delineated with equal accuracy. These illustrations will of themselves be as *Notes* of the most interesting and important character. The printed Notes have precisely the same principle in view; they will be chiefly devoted to an explanation of the *Objects* mentioned in the Sacred Text. It is the wish of the conductors of this 'Pictorial Bible' to render it a work universally acceptable to all denominations of Christians. While, therefore, the critical reader of the Scriptures will have to seek in other editions for comment of a theological nature,—and such editions are as numerous as they are admirable,—the notes of the 'Pictorial Bible' will be limited as we have already described. That such explanations, conceived in a spirit of sincere piety, and with due reference to their connection with the higher allusions of the Inspired Writers, may lead many readers to a more diligent perusal of the Scriptures, there can be no doubt; and some of the labours of the most learned commentators have accordingly been devoted to such points. The Notes to the 'Pictorial Bible' are written by several persons, each well acquainted with the branch which he undertakes; and the whole undergoes the most careful editorial revision. It is published in weekly numbers at 6d., and monthly parts at 2s. each. The Work will be completed in Three handsome *Super-royal Octavo* Volumes; and is printed with a new Type, on fine thick Paper.

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